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The Woman of the Twilight

MARAH ELLIS RYAN

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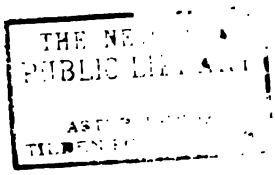
THE WOMAN OF THE TWILIGHT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"There was a gray ship in the far mists . . .
but no voice came back"

[*Page* 374]

The Woman of the Twilight

The Story of a Story

By

MARAH ELLIS RYAN

Author of "For the Soul of Rafael,"
"Indian Love Letters," etc.

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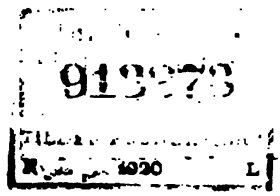

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To
The Perfect Friend
SOPHIA VAN HORN
This
In Loving Tribute
M. E. R.

[redacted]

ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

"There was a gray ship in the far mists, but no voice came back" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

"And always I will be — alone" 42

The broken wing 144

"Forget? Forget?" she whispered incredulously . 254

"He is no longer — dying" 404

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The Woman of the Twilight

CHAPTER I

FOR years McLane Sargent was impressed with the feeling that Aliso Cañon was as some occult dividing line between an old life and a new. Looking backward, it was as if the break in the sea wall there was some fateful portal passed, and connected with the portal was always the smell of the sage and the tang of the sea salt air.

Gilman, of the *Southern Sun,* had persuaded him into taking a run down the coast from Los Angeles on a slight trail of smugglers who were using both coast and Mexican border for the quiet traffic in Orientals. Sargent had not the slightest interest in the oriental question, though he liked some Orientals individually; but he was intoxicated by the harmonies of soft gray-greens of the ranges, the odor of sage and honey in the air, and the wonderful, unforgetable blue of the sea at the edge of the cliffs.

"An automobile is the limit of all aggressiveness and discordance when it is in a background like this," he decided. "It has advantages in a practical way, but who wants to be practical or utilitarian when he

can smell the white sage, hear the meadow-lark, and see that sweep of the sea — not an ordinary blue sea, but deep dark blue — a royal blue. If this coast were in Italy palaces would have been built ages ago where those sheep range above the cliffs. Neither the Spanish or the Americans seem to have possessed any real sense of the beauty of this land. They huddle their dwellings in groups; there is nothing of gracious space such as the land invites. The Spanish might have imported a little of the Moor's art together with his music."

"You wait," suggested Gilman, "while I investigate that fisherman at Boca de la Playa on the Chinese smuggling matter. You can take the machine and run up to old San Juan Mission — it 's only three miles. Usually there is something doing there; a *rodeo* — that is a round-up of cattle or horses — not so many horse ranches these days; but a Spanish dance, or barbecue, or christening — whatever it is in old San Juan it is likely to give you a story. A lot of smuggling is done through this one mission valley, and Mexican renegades from either north or south can find cousins and a hiding place in it — at least that's its reputation. It has a local political mogul who is American, old Lee Bronson, an adventurer who drifted in here with a cavalcade of Mormons on an exodus to the south some thirty years ago. The story is that they camped here two days to rest up and feed their stock, and that on the third morning he married the

daughter of the richest Mexican in the valley and has dominated the region ever since. Half the Mexicans and many of the Indians were connections of his wife's tribe, either with or without benefit of clergy. I saw the man once — a magnificent animal with shoulders a yard across — of a good old southern family, I 've heard; a reckless ranger and inveterate gambler, taking a long chance on any game from a chicken fight to a horse race. Lost a lot of coin, but still lives in a sort of state in an old hacienda with his Mexican brood — keeps open house for any well introduced or representative travelers — the inn of the little hamlet is not alluring, I am told. You are the representative distinguished individual of this outfit, Lane. I 'll use you to the limit in the interests of the *Sun* and hide myself under your toga while I try to find the trail of that Chinese leak. In the meantime you can meet the padrone of the mission valley, and get a character for another 'best seller.'"

All this from Gilman, in his short, jerky sentences as he steered the machine along the mesa from Laguna, with never a glance at the ultramarine of the sea on his right or the carpet of bloom where the range lay in great billows on his left. He prided himself on being able to write a column of live matter and confine himself to words of one or two syllables, and that rapid fire method became a part of his own speech after he found it had a market value. Sargent listened and watched him and smiled.

"You and your machine are typical, Gilman," he observed; "your ultimate ambition seems to be to make a record, to get somewhere; and you see and hear nothing in your going. For the sake of your own soul, listen to that meadow-lark, and look at the wonderful color in the water by the cliff. It changes like an abalone shell in the light and holds all the shades from indigo blue to pink and a veil as of white lace ever forming and sinking, and forming again in a new pattern. Is this all so common to you that you never give it a glance?"

"Never saw it before — was not sure I could get along this way with a machine — heard some tales about high water in the streams — quicksands in some of them, you know — these creeks are treacherous — call them rivers in this country. But this mesa road was the only way to reach Boca de la Playa without going through San Juan, which is desirable if I hope to get any real information from my fisherman. A halt for a glass of wine offered with all courtesy is likely to use up time enough for Juan or Pedro or Diego to slip into a saddle and make a friendly call on the boats and their owner. They are tricky as coyotes, and I tell you, it would pay you to stay over and make notes."

"Still harping! I thought I made it clear that I could only take a run around for a day with you. I've been due in New York for a week."

"*Now* who's the slave of time and speed?"

grunted Gilman. "I should think that after having been soaked in the cold and drizzle of British Columbia, a little sunshine would be worth staying over for."

"It would, but the North Coast book is to go on the presses in a matter of days, and if ever you did a piece of work in a dialect new to the reading public, you'd know enough to get there in time to read proofs yourself. I am barely saving myself time for that. If we don't reach Los Angeles in time for a night train I must take the first one in the morning."

"We can have supper in San Juan and get there tonight; but if there is a fandango in San Juan it is sure to be a morning train. Who are our neighbors?"

They had made a turn and dip, and were gliding around the edge of Aliso Cañon and down the incline to the little velvety green level running north—a fragrant rift in the sea wall—and from a group of tents and wagons a slender figure in scarlet flashed along the opposite trail mounted on a beautiful horse of the palomino markings, its white mane and tail shining like silk against the deep cream coat.

"For the love of Mike!" said Gilman, and stopped the machine with a bump to watch. "It's a girl, a white girl, and she rides like an Indian boy."

Sargent said nothing. He was too much occupied with the wonder; yet it seemed like a corner of the world where the unexpected might always happen.

"A camp of abalone hunters, Indians and Mex-

icans," continued Gilman; "that is apparent, but—I wonder if this might be a point of contact with my Chinese question. It is no slight thing sent the girl off like that."

He started the machine again, approaching the camp slowly and noting the bustle and excitement, and one man to whom the others brought water and wine as he sank back on a little bank breathing heavily as if from a race. One old woman was weeping, and in the chatter and questions of the others the two men heard the name of Don Lee several times.

"Good day, friend," said Gilman to one of the men as he halted near the group, "is there trouble in camp?"

"Trouble, *Ai, ai! Señores,* much of troubles! This man—it is Tomas Alvar, my compadre—has come with much bad word of trouble. *Señor* Don Lee Bronson is already dying with the fall of a horse over a cañon wall—the rains made loose the earth and all went down. The horse is killed dead and Don Lee will ride no more and will walk no more!"

"*Ai!* will walk no more," shrilled one of the older women in Spanish, "and Querida, his Querida, is here away from him when he calls for her. *Ai, ai,* Don Lee! *Ai, ai,* Querida!"

She wailed and rocked her body and exclaimed over the fatality of it, but the two Americans could only comprehend her woe and the name.

"And the girl, the rider?" Gilman made a gesture

towards the road up the side of the cañon where the girl had flashed out of sight to the mesa above.

"That is La Querida; she is his niece, he is as her father—poor little one! It is to her Tomas brings the word, and she rides—see you how she rides that his eyes may see her again."

"I promising Doña Carmel that I find La Querida or I never riding back the trail to San Juan," stated Tomas, who had gulped down the wine and gotten his breath. "My horse there is wet as if he is swimming a river"—then he checked himself at some thought and whispered, "*Madre de Dios!* the river!"

"What it is?" demanded his compadre, impatiently. "Tomas, what you thinking?"

"The *river!* It is the short way. She will try to cross the river, and the waters coming down last night like the flood, and all the quicksands—"

He turned to his horse as if to mount, but the spent brute stood panting, his neck stretched out, his sides heaving. He could never make the race back and overtake that crimson arrow shooting across the mesa. Tomas dropped his head with an eloquent upward gesture of despairing hands.

"I don't know the trail," said Gilman, "but cheer up; unless there are some unusual cut-offs, or an impossible road, we can catch her. Clear the road, that I may back to take the hill—that's it, and now—*adios!*"

"*Adios, adios, Amigo!*" called the men as the ma-

chine swept by them over the bridge and up the grade with all the power it could gather for the spurt.

But the horse and rider were sweeping downward in a barranca a mile ahead, and then emerged a fleeting vision of cream and scarlet. Sargent thought of a graceful bird clearing the sage green of the ranges.

But it was not a road for speed with a car. On every incline where barranca or cañon dipped down to the sea the gray hills were washed in great ruts, and only on the level mesa could they hope to make better time than the reckless "La Querida," who swerved neither to right or left, but sped like a homing bird, or a flaming arrow.

Beyond, they could see a larger range looming and a wide half moon of the surf running in to the yellow cliffs. Somewhere at the foot of those hills the river must run, the treacherous river of the quicksands when the rains made every brooklet as a swift running mill race. The mountains were only ten miles from the sea, and the force of the river at its worst would be problem enough for a girl and horse to swim without the added risk of the shifting, quickening sands.

The two men did not speak of these things; they had ceased talking, but their thoughts were ahead of the car and not of it. They had neither lost nor gained space as yet, or at least the gain had been slight; then two miles of clear mesa came to their lot,

and beyond it they felt must be the downward sweep to the river.

"Hold on," said Gilman, "this is the stretch where we win all we are likely to win to get within hailing distance."

There was silence, as they seemed scarcely to touch the ground until they reached the summit, and then Sargent, leaning forward tense and watchful, whispered, "Thank the gods!"

Gilman, forced to check speed for the unknown decline, glanced ahead and drew a breath of relief.

"Me too!" he agreed, for in a bend of the road below three horsemen had emerged, vaqueros who had halted and were staring at the girl, who checked the pace neither up grade nor down, and who shouted high and clear the query, "Can I cross the river?"

"*Si, Señorita,* we did cross it yesterday!"

Question and answer came clearly to the two men above them, and Gilman shot the car forward with an oath.

"Yesterday, yesterday!" muttered Sargent, staring ahead; "but the man said it was last night the flood came down—the girl does not know—are the men devils? Yell for all you are worth, Gillie; now then, both together!"

The girl must have heard them call. She threw up one hand as response or acknowledgment, but did not turn her head or slacken speed. Evidently she

thought the call was a cheer for the way the beautiful horse was spurning the road beneath him, and as the car shot past the three horsemen Gilman glanced into their smiling faces and came wondrously near grazing them, as he sounded the warning call of the horn again and again and again as the car seemed to fairly drop down from the upper level on the trail of the flying horse.

At that long sustained note of warning the girl did turn her head — but too late!

She was on the edge of the water where at other times the river shore reached its shelving sands gradually towards the center, and a small creek made its way to the sea, which was less than a quarter of a mile away.

But now there was no shelving shore. The force of the water from the mountains had cut clear the course for a river, and the edge of the river in flood was as the straight walled bank of a canal, and the horse, running swiftly to the fording place, plunged from the bank into the treacherous flood, moving so quietly, relentlessly, that no one could guess the depth to which the river had been cut in one brief night and day.

For an instant it seemed as if horse and rider were both going under as they shot downwards, but that warning had at least caused the girl to swerve, turning up stream, and lifting the head of the horse, keeping it above water.

To turn and regain the bank was not a possible thing. There was nothing to do but strive for the opposite wall, against which the water swirled and lapped until one great mass of the adobe soil after another was cut under by the turbid flood and melted into the mass carried out to sea.

Gallantly the beautiful animal swam, his mane and tail no longer like spun silver, but gray from the soiled water. Midway his feet touched soil, and he flung up his head as a victor who has reached the goal and conquered; but only for an instant. The next a brief whinny of fear came from him, and the girl on his back leaned forward, patting his neck, urging, coaxing, lifting him out of the terror in which his feet were tangled.

"The quicksand!" whispered Sargent. The car had halted a few yards from the water, and he had leaped out with the instinct to help, yet there was nothing he could do. The still, relentless current of the river swept between them; it was sweeping the horse towards the sea despite his gallant fight, and the rider knew it. Sargent could sense the moment she knew it, for she no longer urged him to cross, but headed him diagonally down stream and across. Again and again the feet of the animal struck sand banks from which he struggled free, and Gilman shouted praise and encouragement as the further shore was neared.

The girl never turned her head. Sargent said not

a word. He fairly held his breath at the doubt as to whether a horse, thus struggling, would have strength at the water's edge to make the leap to the top of the bank. To scramble or make tentative attempts would only result in crumbling away the adobe wall, and then — he noted twigs and bits of bark swept seaward.

He had cast aside his coat and, loosening his shoes, was keeping opposite, slowly walking abreast, loosening cravat and collar, but never taking his eyes off the horse and rider. If the worst happened he could perhaps swim below her. With help a light figure like hers could reach the bank even if the horse went under — which would happen unless by some miracle or instinct he could find solid footing for his hind feet, that he might make a clear leap to the level above.

And that — the apparently impossible — was what came about. From being swept steadily seaward the rider swerved the horse inward to the shore at a point where a slight jutting of the wall gave a nook for hope, and with urging words and upraised bridle hand, she fairly lifted him for the upward leap.

He gathered himself together like a cat, and sprang upwards, landing squarely and safely, but trembling with a great fear of the thing he had escaped.

A wild cheer went up from Gilman, but the girl, looking back across the stream, took no notice of him. Her glance went upward to the three Fates on the

road above. They had destined her to the quicksands and the sea, and sat in their saddles, watching!

For an instant she stood up in the stirrups and looked back at them, one clenched hand flung upwards and then opening in a sweeping gesture as the brushing aside of a contemptible thing. Not a word, or call, or cry from first to last; and with that brief, direct look, she lifted the bridle, and the horse again swept into the same gait — a steady, tireless run across the green river valley.

Sargent, walking back, watched her as she grew less distinct amid the tall, blooming things beyond the flood of the quicksands, and, silent and safe, did not know he had been a part in an allegory of life!

"Turn the car up the hill," he said as he got back. "If we had plunged in there as that girl did — thinking it a shallow, fordable stream — it would be all up with both of us by now. The least we can do is call those men to a reckoning. What cowardly devils!"

"Too late, son," said Gilman. "They faded away over the range soon as the girl landed. You can't follow broncos over a roadless cattle range. This is not my lucky day — I am not to get to Boca de la Playa over there except by going up along this side of the river to San Juan. It's about three miles, and as this infernal stream is formed by two or three branches we will only have to cross one of the lesser ones, and I can get a horse for the trip back to the coast if the

south branch is not fordable for a machine. We will hustle a bit to see if the girl reaches the village safely."

"What a horse!" murmured Sargent, his mind still filled with the feeling of the river in flood and the strength of the sea drawing the noble creature so near to a death under the cliffs.

"In any other land you would remember the girl," remarked Gilman, as the car sped past walnut groves and stretches of almonds in bloom lining the road, "but in these ranges the children grow up with the colts, and a saddle is more common than a rocking chair. I told you it was worth making the trip for. There is always some new thing for a tourist in the Mexican country."

The girl reached the village safely, and swung from her horse to the store porch a minute after Gilman halted the car at the mission gate.

In the dust of the road the sweat ran in little pools from the animal, but his breath came in great, sure inhalations. The girl patted him with tender hands, and threw the bridle to a Mexican boy.

"Care well for him, Anastacio," she said, briefly. "I would have a grave now in the quicksand of San Juan River but for the soul in him."

"Mother of God!" said one of the Mexicans, jumping to his feet from the wooden bench in the shade. "That horse have swam the river down by the sea? He have brought you through the quicksand and then make the run home after that?"

He was circling the animal, looking keenly over its strong, graceful figure.

"Oh, yes," returned the girl, carelessly, as she went down the steps, "that is nothing for my horse, Pedro Morro! And you can tell your cousin, Manuel, that if he wants me to choke in the river sands, he must lend me one of his own kind of horses to swim it with—a half-breed bronco like he tried to run in the race last week!"

"Manuel!" called Pedro Morro, as she moved away, "Manuel would have sense not to take the river trail today! Yesterday before the last rain comes down six of Manuel's vaqueros try to cross, and all the men had to get out of the saddle and make the swim. But last night the witches turn loose all at one time all the water of the range in this one valley, and every bank of the river is change. Manuel has sense to risk no horses there today. He rides six miles around first!"

"I thought so!—that is because he is like his broncos—a coward!"

"But *Senorita*—Querida!"

"I know now for sure that my uncle is dying," said the girl. "They know he can never again stand on his feet to lash them with a quirt as he did when they were boys. They are jealous of my horse because it makes theirs look like mongrel dogs. You can tell the handsome Manuel that for me!"

Sargent was near enough to hear the cold, angry

words, but without understanding Spanish, the meanings were lost to him. The man, Morro, shrugged his shoulders and rolled a cigarette as he walked again around the horse, eyeing it critically as the Indian walked it up and down the road to cool off. The girl gave Sargent one steady look. Gilman was further away, at the mission gate. Then she flung a glance of disdain at Morro, and ran like a boy along the line of eucalyptus trees to the gate of a large house barely discernible among the palms.

From her scowling face it was difficult to decide whether she was altogether ugly or with the possibility of prettiness under a different mood. Sargent noted, with a little pleasure at its artistic fitness, that she wore a banda about her head such as he noted in the Navajos of the desert. Only the older Indians of the mission groups held to that primitive headgear; the younger generation aspired to the sombrero, or, what was even less artistic, the stiff dark felt of the casual drummer for groceries or hardware.

"Good wind—has that horse," concluded Morro. "I bet on him my own money next time he run in the race."

"That also is typical," observed Gilman. "A prospect of a race, however far ahead, is a thing to dream over." Then he looked down the road where teams were hitched to posts, and horses stood saddled, and riders were straggling in, singly and in pairs, from the ranges.

"Where is there a man who will hire me a horse to ride to the sea?" he asked the Mexican whom the girl had called Anastacio.

"The Don Lee is dying with the fall of a horse down the wall of a cañon," stated Anastacio, "and because of his dying there is no work done anywhere and no one to catch horses and no one to show to tourists the old mission, or the carvings, or anything at all."

"How do you know we are tourists?" asked Sargent, who had already entered the plaza of the mission and was taking great draughts of the fragrance of rose and heliotrope, as his eyes ranged over the green ranges and to the amethystine heights of San Jacinto seen through an arch of the colonnade.

"Also there will be no empty beds in San Juan," continued Anastacio. "Even the padre will sleep tonight in the mission with the ghosts. The padre and the lawyer and the doctor all have come from Los Angeles because that so damn black Pedro horse slip back over the cañon wall by his hind feet and is killed dead by the broke neck."

"An exceedingly humanitarian part of the world, this adopted coast of yours, Gilman," remarked Sargent, "when you call in a doctor, lawyer and padre because a condemned black horse breaks his neck in a cañon."

"Oh, cut it out, Lane!" growled that dapper and disgruntled person. He stared around at the mission, the village, and down the street which was only the

continuation of the main road, El Camina Real, the king's highway of the old Spanish days. "We're in a bad enough box without ragging the natives. If Don Lee is dying, his own retainers will overflow every bed and veranda and patio so far as lodging goes; and, as this boy says, there will be no work done anywhere until it is all over. Unless I can get a horse — you had better climb in — there is no chance for supper this side of Santa Ana."

"Gilman, you are impossible," retorted the other, lifting his hat and letting the cool air of the sea sweep through his brown hair. "You bring me to see the ideal corner of America and would have me back out because a supper is not waiting for us! Supper! I'd go hungry for a week for an hour of just this. If every door in the village was locked against us they can't lock out the sky, and the ranges, and the fragrance, and this — why, it 's another Alhambra! Look at that arch, and that dome, eighty feet high, five feet thick, and never a timber — that was some building! And you talk of supper!"

"Oh, well, you can buy photographs of the old walls; but what I wanted you to see, and write up, were the round-ups and the men on the range. Even a barbecue might have come in our way, and old-time Spanish dances. All these things of the everyday life here! A few years ago we might have seen a bull fight down by the sea, but the American laws stopped

all that. They are changing things until there is little character left in the land."

"With this still in sight?" and Lane Sargent waved his hat from the sea to the mountains. "Gilman, you are so keen on the scent of the concrete romance that you never realize it is in the air about you here. Wake up! You don't seem to grasp the fact that there is any unusual life on this coast outside of your Chinatowns and your various commercial booms."

"Have to write of the things people know about. The blessed public does not really want new themes; they want their old favorite dolls and toys and ambitions refurbished. They want to read of the things they would like to do. Every woman in the audience wants to be the heroine of the melodrama, else the melodrama does not make good! No use racing after romance in the air; that would be too close to the altitude of the poetic. Only two writers in America make a living writing poetry—the age is out of tune for it—and to come down to earth, I will see if crackers and cheese are on tap at the store across the plaza, also what prospect of a horse. I will steer clear of the 'four hundred' here, as it has always been Don Lee's custom to keep open house, and his family would ask to do the honors of the pueblo as a matter of custom."

"Send this lad; he seems willing."

"*Si, Señores.* I do all what you want. If I could

maybe get the key from Doña Carmel I open the door," and he nodded towards the closed church, "but unless the padre has prayers I think maybe no one gets the key. Doña Carmel cannot be spoke with, not all day. All so many people to be fed who have come to the ranch—in the kitchen it is like a day of a fiesta, and they bake now the head of a young bull in the pit by the olive trees."

He pointed with animation past the wall of eucalyptus to where this culinary dainty was in course of preparation, and Sargent smiled sympathetically on the lad who was having a day full of new things, and was proud to be spokesman for the village during this time of stress when his seniors were absorbed in the village tragedy.

"Evidently the Doña Carmel is chatelaine of both the hacienda and the village chapel, likewise the deity presiding over baked bulls' heads," he observed. "To be the padrona of a family where baked bulls are served for a dinner must require considerable executive ability of these Mexican wives. Contrast them mentally with the presiding angel of a pink tea!"

Anastacio halted with the money in his hand for the desired lunch materials, and looked from one man to the other with the ever ready suspicion of the native against the *Americano*. He did not understand the smile or reference to pink tea angels, and resenting that which he did not understand, his black velvet

eyes grew sullen and his shrug was insolent — and meant to be.

"The Doña Carmel is not these names, and she is not an angel of the pink, but my mother says she does penance enough to make her a saint, and that the children of Doña Margarita would be altogether like wild Apaches if Doña Carmel did not pray always to the Virgin in the chapel. She alone sending Tomas Alvar on that quick ride finding La Querida, also in her own house there is a shrine and the lamp always burns there!"

He flung one slender brown hand towards a small adobe house where a veranda was covered with a great vine of the rose of the golden dream. "Also," he added as he moved away, "Doña Carmel is not a Mexican wife; she is not Mexicana and she is not wife!"

Then he stalked down the road with the horse and left the two staring at each other, and Gilman chuckled.

"Fancy a New England boy with that sort of local pride and absurd dignity! He snubbed you as an ignoramus because you did not know the social or spiritual lights of the village — that's one on you!"

"I think it is rather fine. The fact that he was barefoot and had only one suspender did not keep him from acting as champion for the saint-to-be Carmel, whoever or whatever she is! I don't know how I chanced to jar his sensibilities; but it was refreshing,

and what a vista he opens to the imagination! If I had not given so much time to the North Coast work, and had not been actually due in the East any hour in the last three days, I would camp here where saints still walk the earth and save the children of Doña Margarita from being altogether like wild Apaches! Under the critical eyes of that barefoot grandee I would not dare confess that I had never even heard of Doña Margarita. Who is the lady?"

"My evidence is no good. I never was through here but once—with a political delegation—special train. I was taking notes of what the spellbinders were trying to get across to the natives at each hamlet or water tank. I do remember this place because of the old ruin there—also recall that Don Lee Bronson headed the local committee of welcome—had some black-browed sons—looked like half-breeds, but was told their mother was one of the so-called old Spanish families—wealthy, you know—and the family politically prominent, but not much class. There are just about as many pure blood Spanish families in California as you could count on your fingers; the rest are mixed bloods, yet they all call themselves Spanish."

"Curious, that, and over in New Mexico, where more than half the Spanish names have places in history, and every second ranchman knows his pedigree for over two centuries, and the Spanish province of his ancestors, one never hears a man or woman claim to be Spanish—they are too proud of being Mexican!

They have some wonderful old missions there, but nothing to compare with this. I can't believe the friars alone ever built with such stonework north of Mexico, and this setting is superb; even the doves on the Moorish chimney and the linnet nests in the cornices fit into the picture. Yes, if I had a month all my own I'd camp here and write a story of the place; not one about the round-ups, and the bull fights, but of the sort of women the boy told us of — saint-like and devotional. I could fancy anyone becoming religious and devotional here. That glow on the mountains is like a benediction."

They had strolled from the old chancel through the plaza to the inner court, and all the range of the north was a flush of rose and gold as the lowering sun sent floods of color through slender drifts of white cloud, and against the hills were bars of faint lavender shadows across the glory of color.

Gilman regarded him with quizzical lifted brows and looked at his watch.

"You would find your devotional saint fat and black and given to much smoking," he remarked. "Most of them are that after twenty-five; and I've just located your Doña Margarita. She was the wife of Don Lee Bronson and departed life some years ago. Her father was one of the early Mexican traders of this territory. She was a great heiress, who could not write her own name, and was proud of it. Don Lee might gamble away thousands of her money without

protest; but there was civil war when he undertook to pay a few hundreds for a governess for their young olive branches. Yes, I remember hearing of her; she was a very pious lady, and died of some sort of fit of rage after horsewhipping one of her slaves with her own hands — one of the local celebrities for whom obituaries are hard to write! Say! if you want to moon around here a while longer I will follow the boy and try my chance for a horse. It won't take me long to cover the ground. I have the name of a fisherman who may be able to give me some points if he is at home. With this excitement over the accident there is less chance of some native son heading me off. The Chinks either landed at this shore or else crossed the range from Mexico and came down the cañon from the hill. If the padre concludes to have services in the chapel, pray that I find my fisherman and a 'scoop.' Lucky there is a moon — it won't take long to reach supper after we do hit the road. Do your best with cheese and crackers until then — unless, of course, you would rather go over to Bronson's and be introduced. But it won't be gay, and as we could not see Don Lee — well, the rest are characterless."

"Are they?" queried Sargent. "What about the saintly lady of the shrine, and the girl who rode? Querida — queer name!"

"Queer? Not so much," grinned Gilman; "it means 'darling.' Sounds nice, but she is only a scowling kid, with probably a dozen saints' names for her own.

She looked '*diabla*' instead of 'darling' to me; but 'Doña Darling' would look good in a write-up of the range — want to see her?"

Sargent shook his head and turned back to the study of the old ruined walls with the traces of frescoes still to be seen in sheltered nooks where the storms or the linnets had failed to efface them. He was new enough to the land and young enough in years to want to enjoy the quaint, almost mysterious, old place, without Gilman's idea of making a copy of it.

From the colonnade he caught sight of that brisk workman settling himself on the back of a pinto cow pony and ambling towards the sea. And Anastacio, returning with the cheese and crackers, carried also an invitation from the owner of the pony to come down where the vaqueros had made a fire and were roasting ribs of beef by the *acquia,* also there were *vino* and *tortillos.*

Sargent hesitated. The cool air of sunset was coming down from the mountains, soon the stars would be shining, and the men of the ranges would be a picture worth seeing — Indian and Mexican in the glow of their roasting fire — one could hear all the gossip of the valley and the comment on the accident to the padrone.

Then he looked at the great arch of the chancel, and the amethystine height of San Jacinto, and put aside the smaller temptation of pueblo humanity. Even the slight mystery of La Querida was more fascinating

than knowledge of her was likely to be. One could always find groups of people, and voices, and feasting, but the spell of the beautiful old ruin was a rarer thing. It had a personality voiceless, yet eloquent, and he shook his head, and gave Anastacio a coin and thanked him.

"It is not bad to wait here and fast where the old order of priests used to pray," he said. "I read of all this in a book years ago and thought I had forgotten—but it comes back. There was one wonderful priest, a musician who went mad and ended his days here. You live in a place that was great, Anastacio!"

"You knowing that?" The boy's eyes were wide in wonder. "Not so many *Americanos* knowing that. They ask always the question, and no telling anything. I wish I can see Doña Carmel and get that key for the chapel. If she is knowing a *señor* devote time to books of this mission I think surely she would be proud that you see, but it is like I tell you, *Señor:*—this day is one of the sad heart—like crazy is all in that house, and *Señorita* Querida is not found all day until Tomas Alvar he find her pretty near too late! Every time she go like that away where old Indios dry the abalone, or gather acorns, or make *ollas* in the cañon; the Spanish *señoritas* make themselves too proud and rich for that—but Don Lee he always laugh, and call her his boy, and let her go, and the old Indios taking care of her. But Doña Carmel praying

all the time, too, and I think maybe that praying help more than the Indios. What you think?"

It was a delight to watch the boy as he made these disjointed announcements of the pueblo life. The fact that Sargent had read in books concerning the old mission aroused in him an eagerness that the stranger should see the interior of the chapel, though it would be too dark to see the embroideries and robes in the sacristy.

An old man with a cane came slowly across the plaza under the pepper tree and made a signal to Anastacio.

"You are to ring the bells, the padre is to say a rosary, go for the key," he said in English with a strong German accent. "I will help you with the lights, for the Doña Carmel scarcely can come now. Even the doctor can not say how soon the end is."

He rested himself on one of the long wooden benches, while the boy jangled the bells in the usual discordant clamor of a Mexican chapel. Sargent exclaimed at the racket, but the old man smiled.

"They have no nerves, these Mexicans," he remarked. "Yes, they can all strum a guitar, or sing a serenade, but that is what they all do to the mission bells. It sounds like hammers and anvil. Once they say there were men who could ring chimes on them in this valley, but in forty years I have heard no chimes!"

Sargent offered him a cigar as he studied the quaint, square face.

"Forty years! Yet you do not appear as a native," he remarked.

"Sailor once, sheep man now. Don Andres they call me. Every white man was a 'don' in the old days. I come in, bought sheep, got a good herder, and sailed away. A three years of cruise and I am back again. It is a good harbor, and I am still here. Before Don Lee came in with the Mormons I am here. He gets the wife, and the horses, and cattle, and is a big man to these people. I stick to sheep, and I am now the only one of his sort left to have the bells ring for him. When I go there will be only some old Mexicans and Indians to tell how it was when I come into the harbor. These new Americans never will know. San Juan was a place where great games were played. Down by the sea was the race course and place of the bull fights. A cart full of adobe dollars I have seen hauled down the valley for making the bets. There are no such games now in California, and none of the old-time grandees. Don Lee was nearest to it; he was like a big prince out of a book to all these people, and there will be no more like that."

"Who is the girl who rode the cream horse today from Aliso Cañon and swam the river?"

The old man shrugged and smiled.

"If you ask her cousins, Maria and Dolores, they will tell you she is at least the granddaughter of the devil; that is because she is a heretic, like me," and he lit the cigar and puffed it contentedly. "To these peo-

ple all are heretics except their own. Querida is the niece of Don Lee, the child of his sister. The father brought her, a little toddler, to California and left her with Doña Margarita and her cloudy brood — not one of Don Lee's children but look like their own Mexican ancestors. The father of that girl was a great scholar, so I know; it was good to hear his German. He went to Mexico to study the Indian people and their old-time writings, for they did have their own kind of books, the old Mexicans. Well, he died there, did Don Roberto, of a fever, and little Querida lives on like his own with Don Lee. That poor Querida! maybe it goes hard with her now. You saw that ride?"

Sargent told him, and the old fellow listened, nodding and comprehending more than the two Americans.

"Manuel's horse lost the race to that palomino last week," he remarked. "Maybe he thinks it is easy to get rid of it if the quicksands help him, or the river takes them out to sea."

"But the girl?"

"The girl is as a thorn to Manuel; his vanity has been hurt and his horse beaten by her — also she is an outsider. Manuel would burn her as a witch and his conscience would not make him trouble. To be a girl in that brood, and be a heretic is a bad thing here. Manuel is the nephew of the padre."

Sargent sat listening to these grim, matter of fact

statements from the old gossip, who chuckled at being regarded as a heretic, yet conceded it was a bad thing for a girl.

And after they talked of many things, and the purple dusk had fallen, the boy came back with the chapel key. Don Andres went to the door to see that he lit the candles on the little wall brackets, and directly the Mexicans began to straggle out from doorways and gardens and across the plaza. Then the padre came up with two men who spoke English. Sargent concluded they were the doctor and lawyer from the city, but he kept to his shadowy corner where the ivy grew. The devout Mexican women, with the black mantillas, and the swarthy vaqueros and barefoot children were more in accord with the scene than the yawning, bored, professional men, who peered into the little chapel, where the more devout knelt on the tiled floor, and then sauntered again to the village street.

"Sometimes, when the boys are drinking wine, and not working, they are not so respectful, and they make foolishness in the plaza even with the prayers inside the chapel," remarked the old man, "so I stay here and keep watch. It is a disgrace if they interrupt a prayer for Don Lee—there are his daughters, Maria and Dolores. Maria is the beauty, and is soon to marry with a rich boy of the valley."

Maria certainly was a beauty, but would have been more truly so had it not been for the dead white powder and frank rouge on her young cheek. It was

startling to Sargent, who had not hithertofore come in contact with this lurid custom of many Mexican ladies. But she was slender, with a pretty oval face, big black eyes and magnificent black hair. A string of pearls circled her round throat, and little crosses of them formed her earrings. She carried herself as if used to admiration, while her younger, less brilliant sister wore amber beads and a rebosa of amber silk over her white gown. Neither of them seemed in grief; each noted and acknowledged the greetings of the villagers as the light from the chapel door streamed out in the growing dusk. The padre had lit the candles on the altar, and each figure was silhouetted against the glow as they entered the doorway.

And then a woman came quickly across the twilight of the plaza, and halted a moment ere she entered. Sargent sat up in astonishment, and Don Andres beside him turned at his gasp of surprise. The others had been of the ordinary peasant type — even those who wore jewels and were pretty.

This one wore no jewels, and the silk of her dress and lace of her mantilla were dead black and very fine. There was pride in the carriage of her head, yet a strange humility in her eyes, but beyond all there was a still atmosphere of sadness in the dark eyes and high-bred Spanish face; it enfolded her, as did the drapery of black lace falling to her little slippered feet. In her hand were white lilies for the altar — the getting of them had evidently delayed her a trifle — and

she halted on the threshold, either to reassure herself concerning the progress of the service, or to regain her breath, for she had hurried. Only an instant she stood in the ray of light from the altar. It touched her lightly as the rays of the sun outlined the slender curve of the new moon, leaving the rest in shadow. She suggested a dark and very perfect star crossing some path of brightness and melting again into dusk, and a moment later the silken folds of her gown rustled on the bare tiles as she knelt in the aisle beside an old Indian woman bare of foot and workworn with years.

To Sargent her coming out of the twilight and, after one glowing moment, sinking into a mass of sombre, lace-draped curves, was as a vision of Old Spain seen through the Moorish arch of the corridor — Old Spain with the heart of youth and the foreboding sadness of death. She looked perhaps thirty-five.

"What a wonder of a woman!" breathed Sargent. "I know artists who would cross land and sea for one picture of her like that!"

"Some have come here for that, but always went away again. Don Lee saw to it that they went away," and the old man chuckled. "All he in this valley got he held to since the day he camped first under the live oaks over there — except, of course, what a man would lose on a game or a race. Horses and women he could keep!"

"Horses and women! But these girls of his family are different, without blood or race, and you say they

are like their mother's people! This woman—heavens! She is all twilight and white lilies and burning eyes. She is a princess or a ghost of Moorish Spain!"

"One grandfather was Gobernador of Old California," said Don Andres, quietly. "One was a soldier of Mexico, and her father was a priest. Yes, it was good blood!"

"A priest!"

"The bishop sent him somewhere else for Indian missions after that. He never came back to California. There was no trouble about it. The mother was a good daughter of the church while she lived; her child was a new toy without a name in the house of the old Gobernador while *he* lived; but after that—and all the money was gone, well—after that Don Lee sees her, and a girl is not a meadow-lark to grow her clothes and pick her food from the fields! Yes, Don Lee saw her and that is more than ten years now; yes, more than twelve. There was no woman in his house save such as men always have, and his children were running wild. Now I hear these same children are wild in another way—with fear that at the last he might marry her; men do strange things like that at the last sometimes! It would be bad, and some accident would surely happen her in some night time."

"Good heavens! Yet in breeding and training she is no doubt the superior of the woman he did marry!"

"Sure, she can read and can write, but it would make

trouble. They are jealous of her like they are of little Querida; just the same, Don Lee gives her, long ago, the little house and orchard, and even that made jealousy with the children — they love money — it was his own money, too. But I think the padre would find some reason not to make a marriage between Don Lee and Doña Carmel, though everyone knows her a saint — and to his children she has been also a martyr."

"Doña Carmel! *That* is Doña Carmel?"

"Surely, and, as I say, she has been also a martyr. No Indian slave would do for his children what she has done these years — that is how it is with a woman of race and blood who is faithful to a Don Lee. It is all no use if she has not also the name!"

There was a slight tinge of bitterness in the old man's voice at the last, though all the rest of his rambling, low toned discourse had been quite casual, as a series of incidents long familiar and often discussed.

"But it is incredible! A woman like that, charming, well bred, could have the world at her feet instead of being the patron saint of an old Indian pueblo. The world makes a way for such women, and some of them have worn crowns!"

"When a woman like Doña Carmel has love for a man a crown is not of so much worth as a crust of bread he could give her. I have years, and I have seen that in many lands. It looks foolish to the world, but the women who care for crowns could never in a life-

time know a minute of the heart of Doña Carmelita. She thinks she adores the saints and the God. Maybe once it was so, but not now — not since she has come to San Juan. I wonder sometimes if she even lives when he is gone, so much she lives her life in his!"

The voice of the old man trailed away thoughtfully. The village tragedy had stirred up buried things and memories, and to utter them to a stranger was as if they were spoken to oneself, or only thought.

"What a brute the man must be!" said Sargent; but Don Andres lifted his hand in protest.

"No, no! He has done good to many. Many men have little ranches today of their own, and have good houses for wives and children who were given their first start with the cattle and the flour of Don Lee. Everyone says that. All say he was a good padrone; all these people on their knees in there are praying for him — that says something!"

"Perhaps it says they want patronage from his children when he is gone," agreed Sargent; "but to take the girl, a girl like that, to take advantage of such feeling as she had for him, and then not protect her!"

"It would have made trouble," persisted the old man. "There was a time when the name of Don Lee was spoken of for Gobernador. It would have made trouble — the American papers print all things. Yes, she was as his slave, and had beauty, and was a saint in her heart, and had the blood of learned people, but

all would go for nothing when the name of her father was not given to her by the church—all would go for nothing for a wife of a Gobernador."

"If he was a man he would send the nomination to hell, marry the woman, and take her out of the country!"

"Don Lee was a man, but not that kind of a man. To go to a strange land would lose for him all the power here, and he had much power. No, he lived as was the custom. No one thought ill of him. The satin slippers and laces show he was kind, and there is the little house in the orchard all her own. No one thinks ill of Don Lee."

"He is kind and she is saintly!" said Sargent, grimly. "Then why should she be barred from marriage, when men marry women who are not saintly every day? In this valley, at the edge of a world, what difference would it make to society?"

"It is the custom. So long as he does not marry her she is not seen to belong to him, and his fine friends come down with their wives from Los Angeles and visit and ride and have great sports. They close their eyes to the woman who lives in the little house of the orange orchard; she is not of his family! But if he makes a marriage with a daughter of a priest it would be a scandal and no wives would come with the husbands. It is strange, and it is the women who do it, not the men, but it is the custom. To get to the

bottom of it is a big trouble. Don Lee did the easiest thing when he did not marry."

"Easiest for him, perhaps, but what of the woman? What will become of her?"

"Here the people adore her, they understand, and she has her little house and a shrine in it, where the light never goes out. That helps some women, many women."

His voice trailed away again as if talking to convince himself. He was evidently tired; it had been a day of excitement, and he was old.

The *"Ave Maria"* came to them as the moon came over San Juan mountain, and then the murmur of voices, and the tones of the padre in the final blessing. The people came slowly out, but once beyond the corridor fell to chatting, and flirting, and laughing softly as they went through the plaza. No one noticed the two men in the old seat by the wall; the ivy and a great rosebush screened them.

Anastacio emerged and stood at the door with the key. The padre entered the sacristy to doff his cassock, and came out through a side door, greeting the old man airily.

"*Hi!* Don Andres, do I find you making your devotions outside the chapel in the dark? Well, well, at last we will get you inside and save you in spite of yourself! Come, we will walk down to Don Lee's and have a glass of good wine, and then you will tell

us some of the pirate tales your old captains told," and he moved on to greet a group loitering for him in the plaza, taking it for granted the old man would follow.

Don Andres straightened up and touched his sombrero to Sargent.

"*Adios, compadre,*" he said, whimsically, "we covered forty years here in the old mission in not more than forty minutes. I had joy in your cigar even if you did not flavor it with charity."

"Charity?"

"Yes, you could give Don Lee justice, but I could not find mercy in your words, or—understanding. You are young. Come you back to San Juan in ten years, or when you are the age of Don Lee, and watch the moon rise over the ruins once again. *Adios!*"

"*Adios!* If I do come back, and it should be twenty years, I shall not forget the twilight here—or your story!"

"A man can forget and remember again many times in twenty years," said the old man as he moved away. "You are still young."

Sargent laughed, and keeping pace he thrust some more of the approved cigars into his hand, and moved hastily back to avoid his thanks or remonstrance. In doing so he came close to Anastacio, still at the door, his hat in his hand and his head bent. He had made no move to snuff the candles even on the altar.

Sargent, looking through the door, saw why. The

woman—in his mind he already called her "The Woman of the Twilight"—was kneeling at the altar of the Virgin, and the lilies were heaped about the feet of the statue. The service of the padre had been conventional, but there was nothing conventional in the silent prayer of the woman as she knelt with upreached arms and face lifted to the goddess of motherlove. The lace had fallen from her hair, and the slow tears brimming over her wide-open eyes accentuated the very essence of supplication in her face.

The hand of Sargent fell on the shoulder of the boy as he drew him from the sight of a grief too personal for other eyes, and as he did so he remembered Don Andres' words, "These Mexicans have no nerves." For Anastacio was sorry for Doña Carmel, and respectful, yet once away from the sight of her tears he was eager and interested in other things.

"You seeing Don Andres and hearing him talk?" he said, "*Christo!* how he can remember in his mind. They say his head was hit on a ship and when he is asked question he forgets to stop with the talk. But me, I wishing I had to see all the places he has seen, there is more than fifty places! But he has make money on the sheep, plenty money, and he talks four ways for the different countries."

"Is he married?" asked Sargent.

"Who, Don Andres? No, he is not marry. Doña Marta, who is Indio, she keeping his house, and do all what is done. *Christo!* how she whipping the boys

who make to steal the figs in her garden. No, not so many *Americanos* marry, only Don Lee once, that was long ago. Don Andres is not *Americano;* he is not Spanish, but he coming here a long time now. My grandfather, he is remembering that time."

They had walked to the far end of the corridor, and in the moonlight Sargent could make out a pinto cow pony coming up the road. His attention for a moment was concentrated on trying to make out if it was or was not Gilman returning from the beach, and he did not see a slender figure like a low-flying night bird under the orange trees until it had almost reached the chapel door.

"It is La Querida," stated Anastacio. "She never comes for prayer, she is heretic, but always she comes for Doña Carmel in the night, for Doña Carmel is scare of the darkness. No Spanish *señorita* would come here where ghosts are — only La Querida. She is like a boy, that girl. Manuel Morro says she is a witch and is bad. I no knowing how that is, but Doña Carmel sure is knowing, and is loving her — *mucho.*"

They had halted under the pepper tree, and could see that by someone the lights on the altar were being extinguished one by one, until the chapel was more dusky than the moonlit plaza. Then, when only one candle was left glimmering in its sconce on the wall, the woman of the lilies was led through the door by the girl, and her rich contralto voice called imperatively.

"Anastacio! where is that key?"

Anastacio pressed the arm of Sargent for silence ere he ran forward with silent bare feet.

"It is here, *Señorita!* I have wait to make the door lock. I not going away while Doña Carmel is at the altar."

"H'm!" Sargent could not see the face of the girl, but he could note the irony of the tone. "Since when are you so fine a *caballero,* Anastacio? And what will you expect for it tomorrow? Lock the door and follow."

Anastacio padded past her into the chapel to blow out the candle, and the two strange, shadowy figures passed near to Sargent, who leaned against the bole of the pepper tree. Their arms circled each other, and the woman of the tragic life rested her head on the shoulder of the girl, who walked with a certain pride and dominance.

"It is for you also I am praying, Querida," said Doña Carmel, sadly. "I cannot tell you there in the house, Maria always is listening. But it will be well with you, and you will go away from San Juan. I write yesterday a telegram for Don Lee to a friend, an *Americano* in San Francisco. He will come, he will take you to maybe your own people."

"I have no own people!" said the girl. "I will stay with you. I have no people but a black woman who was my nurse—she is South, far away, where my mother died—I will stay with you!"

"And carry always a dagger, Querida?" asked the woman, sadly. "No, poor little one, the American friends will come and will take you where it is safe. I am not strong enough, alone, to guard you. And always I will be—alone!"

Sargent, with the story of her life yet murmuring through his mind, felt the tears in his eyes at the pathos in her voice, but the girl threw up her head in disdain of all danger.

"*Huh!*" and her exclamation sounded to Sargent half Indian, "I can guard myself from all danger, always. Where is that boy? He needs the reata—all of them are full of tricks!"

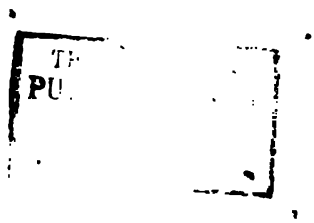
"I am here, *Señorita,* and here is the key," said the agile Anastacio as he sped past Sargent. "I am walking behind you to the door of your house."

He delivered the key, and then fell behind, and promptly sped back to Sargent under the pepper tree.

"*Adios, Señor,*" he whispered. "I sure get that reata to morrow if she knowing I let her go past you in the dark so close you could touch her with the hand! Your friend, he is coming, and I not seeing you any more, but you not forgetting San Juan? *Adios,* and *gracios Señor, mucho gracios!*"

In his delight at the dollar slipped into his hand he almost forgot his English, also his whisper, and only the arrival of Gilman, halting by the automobile, saved him from the discovery of having had a companion in the plaza.

"And always I will be—alone"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"Here, boy!" called Gilman, giving no heed to the two feminine figures passing through the gate. "Take this bronco to its owner. Here's a tip for you. You there, Sargent? It would have paid me just as well to loaf here in this tumbledown old place as to flounder over the adobe mud to the sea. Not a soul in sight, and the fish shanty locked with a padlock, as if anyone would carry it away even as a gift. Climb in, for Heaven's sake, and let's get to supper!"

Sargent did so without comment, and his eyes lingered on the slender figure in the moonlight draped in black lace, and followed by Anastacio at a respectful distance. He scarcely noted the girl beside her.

"You see," said Gilman as they whirled up the valley, "it is not only the fishermen who have knocked off work, but the whole valley. Don Lee is too important to pass over, and if he dies—"

"Don't talk to me of your very important Don Lee!" said Sargent, impatiently. "He is a selfish brute, a vampire. God! I'd like to write him up—and I'll do it, too, if I live. I got the whole story tonight, a wonderful picture, even the title—'My Woman of the Twilight.' I never knew America had a corner left that was so worth while."

"Coming back?" asked Gilman, and Sargent could tell he was grinning in the darkness.

"No, I think not. Impressions are truer than facts. I've got my impressions. I would have to study Spanish to get at all the facts, and in the end I might lose

something. 'My Woman of the Twilight' is perfect to me as I see her; I don't want to see her in any other light. She is love, primitive love touched by religious fervor, not a thought of political or social law, only the law of human nature confused and puzzled by rulings of state!"

"H'm, yes," grunted Gilman, "you'll sober up tomorrow, but pueblo wine does give one a devil of a headache. Now, *what* do you suppose we are going to strike next on the way to supper?"

For they had reached a narrow place in the road between the mesa and a barranca, and a waving light was in the road, while a man, swearing and unseen, was tinkering under an automobile. A chauffeur, shaky but polite, was waving the lantern.

"No, sir," he said in reply to Gilman's query. "I don't think we need any assistance. It is all right now, sir, and if you will only go carefully you can make it around us, but in a minute or more, sir, we will be out of the way."

The man from under the car crawled out, growling about having been given an old junk heap for a car, also stating what he would do to the garage people when he got back to Los Angeles.

He gave no heed whatever to the two men in the other car.

"Go ahead!" he said, curtly. "It's dollars to doughnuts we won't reach San Juan tonight at this rate!"

As the car started slowly the light flashed on the face of the speaker and Gilman whistled softly as he sped his own car ahead.

"Say," he remarked, "what do you suppose any of the simon-pure Plymouth Rock breed is after on this mesa trail? That sure did look like Glyndon Wayne of 'way down East. I had to interview him once on a gambling mix-up, but his folks came in and fairly bought up the paper to squelch my brilliant article."

"The only Wayne I know is a pretty girl. Don't know your traveler," said Sargent. In fact, he had scarcely seen the man—his mind was full of a mission plaza, and a woman like the new moon at twilight.

"You are no poorer," was Gilman's comment. "He has sown wild oats enough to make up for all the suppression of his Puritan ancestors. This looks like a clear road ahead, and if you went to prayer meeting at that old chapel I hope you said at least one prayer for a good supper at Santa Ana! I'm starving. Me for the fatted sheep and the festive high-ball."

CHAPTER II

THE sun was high above the hills when the doctor from Los Angeles, followed by a servant with coffee, went to the guest chamber of the hacienda and aroused the man who had arrived so late in the automobile.

"He is awake and can see you now, Mr. Wayne. I had to give him that morphine to brace him up for the talk he wants. To talk won't hurt him as much as to fret about it. So go ahead; he is good for a spurt, but only his marvelous strength has staved off the final collapse. The man has been actually dying for over twenty-four hours. While you see him I will take a rest and trust you and Doña Carmel. Keep out his various groups of children unless he asks for them. He only seems to worry about that younger one, the fair one; they tell me she is his niece instead of daughter — Querida they call her — but when I called her that she called me down! a pugnacious little animal — informed me her name was Monica, and Querida was only a baby name and not for strangers."

The stranger heard this without comment as he swallowed his coffee, adjusted collar and tie and slipped on coat.

The doctor had stretched himself out on a couch

watching him, and wondering why, since the lawyer had attended to all legal details, the coming of this stranger had been so eagerly waited for by Lee Bronson.

As he passed along the hall he met the pretty Maria, who welcomed him with sweet, conventional phrase, and Doña Carmel, who had no words, but whose dark eyes told her fears.

She followed him into the room of Don Lee, arranged the pillows, gave him a glass of water and then slipped out like a shadow, after murmuring some warning to little Juanito, who plied a great fan of peacock feathers. Juanito was the little brown Mercury who served Don Lee instead of a bell.

The man on the bed reached out his hand but said no word of greeting. He was looking as with new eyes on an old comrade, seeking to find that which had been lacking in the others around him. He saw a man about forty, good-looking and self-satisfied; a man who carried himself with a consciousness of domination, yet it had something of the quality of a pretty woman used to admiration. Not that he was effeminate, yet beside the rugged herculean man on the bed he almost looked so. His dress was rather that of the clubs than of the ranges, and if he had been English he would have been deemed a remittance man by the average Californian. His hands were small and well cared for, and his eyes so dark that under their curled black lashes they looked almost black. They were

quick, restless eyes, and took in the entire room at a glance. The steady gaze of Don Lee made them waver, and he sighed and seated himself by the bed.

"I am sorry it has come to this, Bronson," he said, "and if it was legal details, or—"

"No, it is personal, family," said Don Lee, still gazing at him in that speculative way difficult to understand. "I don't know, we have been friends, even partners at times, for twenty years, you and me. You know all this," and he made a slight gesture, indicating either the household or the endless ranges, "and I'm wondering—"

"Don't wonder or waste strength, Bronson. I opened the telegram and caught the first train. If it's a family affair I'm not sure but what I could beat a lawyer, for your family has always been quite a proposition with its various shadings. I am at least elastic."

"Yes, that is what I was thinking—I never thought of it before—you've been ranging, and—"

"And not always popular with my own folks. You were lucky enough to be born in Georgia instead of Massachusetts, so you never knew what it meant to have to fit yourself into a Puritan scale of thought, or else be tabooed as the black sheep; but if those Nevada shares pan out big I'll go back and make them all sit up and take notice! But now, right here, what can I do for your family? I hear your little beauty, Maria, is to marry the son of Galvez soon, and you say the legal things are settled."

"Yes, Doña Margarita's children, of course, were arranged for. That part of the estate will not be divided. Maria will have this home — she and Galvez will keep up the old Spanish ways — her mother's way. The wedding must not wait because of — this. I have told the padre and the boys, José and Ricardo — they will manage the ranch matters. There is money enough for all. But Monica, my little one, Querida —"

He was silent a bit while Wayne watched him, waiting. When he did speak it was to ask, "Where have you been these months? It's a year since you were here last."

"Yes. I was in Mexico a while, then San Francisco."

"Is there a — woman there?"

"For me? No one woman anywhere."

There was a long silence. He seemed trying to make plans, yet helpless.

"Bronson, speak out. You want me to do something. Don't worry and think over it; tell me straight, that's why I'm here."

"It's the child, Monica; she will be a woman. Not a woman for this black and tan region! You — you never knew her mother, else you'd see why. The blood is different. She is a little rebel to everything here, and a fighter, like a boy. You see it was a boy her mother wanted, not a girl, and now, now —"

"I see. You want me to do something for her — what?"

"Marry her."

Wayne stared at him with the thought that delirium had taken a hand in the game. Lee Bronson sensed it and smiled in a wan, troubled way.

"No, I'm not loco, yet, but I've been milling this thing in my mind ever since the doctor gave his verdict. I have no folks, her father's people are all gone, there is a little plantation down there in Georgia for her, some money here. It is n't money, it 's folks she needs. You have them and are — free. The padre knows I want it this way — he will talk to her. Take her as a boy, a protegé; let the marriage relation side of the question go — only protect her by your name for a few years. She is not safe here — a white snowdrop in this brown hell, and all these half-castes watching her like wolves! Can't you see? I'd send her to a convent, but in the end this is where she 'd come back to — to her only home. I want a different home. This is all right, a sort of paradise for a man, but it would be hell for a girl who is — who is different from all the rest. That 's what I had on my mind — that 's all."

Wayne walked to the window and stared out over the eucalyptus trees to the blue sea beyond.

"It 's a gamble, Bronson," he said at last. "I'd rather give the cards a chance, or even pitch pennies to decide, but we two have done nearly everything except get married for each other in the last twenty years, and I am game to try it. She will probably balk, but I have some cousins and aunts to help along, and it

may wake up another woman who thinks she is going to keep me forever in a trance. My Protestant, puritanical women relatives may not suit your little mission girl much better than I would. Her teachers have, I suppose, been the padre and your housekeeper."

"You will find a creedless mind, a virgin field. There has been so much of jealousy. Doña Margarita's children have been always unquestioning, devout. They have always called Monica 'heretic' because her parents were of another creed, and it has borne fruit. She mocks the things they worship and makes little gods of her own out of clay like the Indians; concocts weird prayers to them, and altogether creates havoc in the house. The Mexicans are half afraid of her, yet it is only reckless daring, the protest against their forms."

"You don't try to draw a picture attractive to a man."

"Whatever games we've shared together I haven't ever lied to you, and this is no time to begin. She is a stray here, a rebel, an outsider. Her mother, my sister, was perfection. She belonged to the Puritan colonial days—a Protestant saint lifted from a white altar. So, I want her daughter taken out of the life here. I had planned it for next year—Europe for a while, and then back to the little Georgia plantation afterwards—after Maria was married here, and the divisions of the land made—all that, and now—"

His voice trailed into silence, utter weariness, in rehearsing the one failure of his otherwise materially

successful life. His lands reached from the mountains to the sea, and a regiment of retainers, Mexican and Indian, fed daily from his stores, yet the weight of care for one little woman child suddenly made all his life seem a failure.

"I will make it all right, Bronson," said his visitor at last; "no need to fret over that. My family cut a rather wide swath in their own territory, so she is sure of family and position, even though I am not regarded as a shining light. As to money, you have lent me enough to know I am not weighted by wealth, yet there are those Nevada mining shares bound to make good—in time. The niece of Don Lee Bronson and the granddaughter of Colonel Sturtevante should make a better match than this, but I'll take care of her till she gets tired, and the future can look after itself."

Lee Bronson reached out his hand and settled back on the pillow with a sigh of relief.

"Go, Juanito," he said to the Indian boy wielding the great feather fan, "find La Querida, and the padre, and—" He lay with closed eyes, smiling. He had ordered all things to his own content. All his life he had dominated, and it could not occur to him that his choice was not the best, or that the child who made her own gods of clay might turn rebel against his decree.

"Let me go and find her," suggested Wayne. "It might make it easier than to break it to her through

the padre. I think I will know her from the rest, though you certainly have a varied collection here."

He spoke truly, for the various branches of Doña Margarita's family were all represented. They were really gathered in courtesy and kindliness to show respect to Don Lee; and the lower rooms and the patio were filled by black-garbed women, toddling children, and men who rolled cigarettes and talked of the herds, the crops, or the memories of Bronson's lusty youth, when he had come among them a stranger as a young god from the north, and in a day was as one with them, and ever had been.

Several of the men greeted Wayne, the *Americano,* courteously as the well-remembered friend of Don Lee, and he went on through the groups with the consciousness that they had always greeted him thus—as an Americano—while Bronson, as American as himself, had, from the first, been a *compadre* instead of an outsider.

It gave him momentarily the point of view of Bronson, who could not die and leave his sister's child an alien among his own children. Among all the group there he could think of only one who would possibly remain faithfully devoted to her, and that was Doña Carmel, who had lived many love years as first favorite of the dying man—the gentle, devoted Carmelita—with her many prayers, her ever burning candles, and her lack of any hope of recompense save the right of love to serve.

He wondered how he could make clear to his New England aunts that Doña Carmelita was really a very good woman, and infinitely the superior of Doña Margarita, a passionate, purse-proud creature, with a vanity based entirely on worldly possessions and the mastery over a little army of Mexican and Indian retainers.

He was thinking of these things as he followed Juanito along the irrigation ditch to the deeper shadows of the fragrant eucalyptus grove.

"Are you taking me to the Indian homes in the willows?" he asked, and the boy flashed a smile, but shook his head.

"Some days she does go there — to learn their witchcraft, it is said — but not this day. The Don Lee sleeps that she cannot make talk with him, and old Diego Miguel has brought new clay from the hills for ollas, and La Querida learns — *Christo!* she learns all so in a hurry — so she hides from the women."

She evidently was really hiding from them, for she had made a wattled screen towards the house, and was kneeling beside a water jar fashioned of coils of clay, and smoothed inside and out by a primitive knife — a mere slab of flattened stone — and accepted meekly the critical grunts of a withered old Indian, who was engaged upon another and a larger vessel.

She flushed as her visitor approached, and glanced at her skirt soiled by the clay and water, and at her hands, which she could not offer in greeting.

"But you are welcome, Don Glyn," she said, "even though this mule, this most stupid bronco (meaning Juanito), should be lashed for not making me a sign from the window! You see the window of my uncle from here, and I left this rabbit with a feather fan and towel to wave from the window if I am wanted, or if my uncle awakes; but he is such a spy to want to see that he does not signal but comes. Never again will I trust you — toad!"

Juanito, at a safe distance behind the big, strong American, only blinked at this outburst — words fall lightly in comparison with other weapons, and it was his lucky day, because her hands were too slippery to hold him — and she had no quirt.

Wayne surveyed her with considerable surprise. As she stood up she was taller than the old Indian beside her; in the year since he had seen her she had shot up like the reeds by the river in the early summer. This reed had little form — only great gray eyes under dark brows — a thin, almost hungry face, and two braids of hair hanging long and rope-like over her shoulders; hair of brown with reddish glints in it. Her skin was very white and absolutely without color; only the full mutinous lips were so red that Wayne thought he had never seen teeth look so white by contrast. All the life in her face was in the lips and the gray eyes, in which there were golden lights — or were they green? The impression was of a still white mask through which a soul peered out, yet hid itself. It was not the face of

the pretty child he had sauntered out to find — she was not pretty — yet she was something more. In that first glance he had seen why poor Bronson was weighed down with the responsibility of this young rebel, as he called her. She was so much an outsider that she had not even acquired the suave manner of her olive-skinned cousins, neither had she the girlish note of the Anglo-Saxon maid. She was a silver pheasant astray among the brown fowl of the barnyard; yet, even while the thought of the silver pheasant came to him, the tilted head suggested a young hawk.

"Are you in a rage with my guide because he helped me find you?" asked Wayne, amused and baffled by her attitude and her alert, blunt decision. He slipped a silver coin to Juanito, who with hasty thanks ran back in glee to show it to the less lucky lads at the corral.

"He knows why I am in anger with him," she said with a shrug of disdain at that gift of silver. "For three days he fears to come near me alone, lest I get my hands on him where no one can save him. My uncle does not know why all at once good little Juanito is so devoted; and it is of no use to tell women: women are fools! They would ask the padre to give him a penance, and the padre would make him say some 'Our Fathers' and 'Ave Marias'! A quirt is a better prayer for Juanito."

Her visitor looked after the flying figure of the boy.

"You certainly have him filled with respect for your sort of religion," he observed.

She nodded curtly.

"None of them dare to touch me alone," and there was a grim-twisted smile on the red mouth as she quietly motioned for him to be seated, while she continued her work of coiling the wet clay around the walls of the jar, "but three days ago that toad told Manuel Morro that I was riding up the cañon alone to see old Diego Miguel," and she nodded towards her aged companion. "Manuel had sworn as long ago as Easter that he will kiss me, and some day marry me—*pah!* So he hid in the willows, and also Carlos Galvez, who is to marry my cousin Maria. I have told no one except old Diego Miguel—but the two boys got their kisses! Manuel has a bad hand, which he says was burned by a reata when he was roping a bronco; it is tied up and no one sees it, and poor Carlos has his pretty cheek cut from a fall when the foot of his horse went into a sink-hole by the acquia and gave him a bad fall on a stone. It was a very sharp, clean stone and will leave only a thin scar," and she slipped from under her blouse a slender dagger and held it lightly on her open palm for him to see.

"Good God!"

"Dear Carlos does not come near me so often now," she continued. "Maria takes care of his cheek and kisses it well. But he has told Maria that I have witch

power, and that she must not danger her soul by sleeping in the same bed, so I have a whole bed to myself now. Last night I found a cross in it made of palm, and thrust full of cactus needles. That is because I am heretic."

"Good God!"

Wayne stared at her in a sort of fascinated horror; not so much at the facts related, as at her unchildlike mental attitude towards the weird situation. She accepted it as a usual and natural condition of affairs in which she owed it to herself to be the victor at every turn.

"But have you told no one, the older people, the padre?"

She shook her head.

"Maria would lie for dear Carlos and prove he was with her when he fell, and Manuel is so handsome, and has a good ranch, and all the girls are so crazy about him that he would find it easy to prove anything. No, words are no use, and they know my uncle will never walk again, or call any of them to account. Doña Carmelita is my one friend, and the family all say she shall not stay under the roof when my uncle dies. He gave her a little orange orchard and a house on it, and they all are jealous of that. If he dies I will go there and live with her."

He saw that she had reckoned on all the changes to come, and was expecting to meet and conquer them as she had the men who waited for kisses in the willows.

"You have forgotten, Monica, that you have rights, and that a girl must allow herself to be protected by the laws. There are friends of Don Lee who—"

"Law!" and she made a little clicking sound with her tongue. "Don Glyn, do you not know there is no law in San Juan on a dark night?"

"Why—I—"

"You belong back in a land where men who kill each other are hanged; but who ever heard of any one being hanged for any of the many dead men picked up on the one little street of this pueblo? Law! There are laws perhaps, but I have seen men roped and tied to trees on election day and only let go after votes were decided. They tore down the American flag and pulled it to ribbons during the Spanish war, and what did the law do? You know the law is only used here to protect money or property of some sort. I ought to know. My uncle has been at the head of the politicians. Since I was a baby I have sat on the knees of his friends while they smoked and gamed and talked over the prices of men. I could tell you this minute where you could hire a man to knife any one who was a trouble to you, and how much it would cost you; or if you are interested in smuggling Chinamen into the States I can tell you the right man to meet them at the Mexican border. Six of them went past our home last week, half smothered under a load of hay. The hay was sold in Santa Ana; that man who sold it is a relation of my cousins. Maria says it is

witchcraft because I know all these things, and that no man will ever be found bold enough to marry me; but only my ears and my eyes have helped me, not the witches."

"You have forgotten to take into account the brain back of the ears and eyes," he observed.

"I'm glad you came today," she said, with a quick, grateful smile. Her changes of expression were April-like in their sun flashes under the clouds. "I have been like the smoking mountain above the hot springs for so long that I had to talk, or an earthquake might have happened! I do talk to Diego Miguel, but he only says, 'Pray to God, little darling,' and that makes me want to scream. I am not a 'little darling,' and when I do get down on my knees to please Doña Carmel, I don't know what to pray for. Doña Carmel has prayed all her life, and what great things have the saints done for her?"

Wayne laughed, but shook his head over her rebellious explosions — they were so unlike what one would expect from her colorless face. Her reference to the sleeping volcano within sight above the orange trees struck him as being very apt. That mountain had slept for a generation, and only a thin thread of smoke told at times that the heart of it was still beating, though smouldering unseen.

"What you need is women, real women, around you. What would you think of a convent?"

"What would they think of me," she retorted, "if I told them I carried a dagger rather than say prayers? They would say just about what Maria and Dolores say. No, I like men best; Diego Miguel is a better comrade than the women. He teaches me to work in the clay, and then sells the ollas; also he does not say it is witchcraft when I try to make horses or dogs or people out of clay. You have seen the wooden statues of the saints in the mission? Well, some day I will learn enough either to make statues too, or else paint pictures with colors. I have my father's drawings, and have made copies of all of them. I have made one picture already of Diego Miguel, but no one has seen it. If he should fall sick, or die, they would all say the picture brought the ill luck, so I am waiting."

Wayne whistled softly to himself.

"What patience! But at least we have found one thing you can pray for; it would really make you more normal. You can pray to be an artist or a sculptor."

"Would to pray make an artist? I thought it was work, and years of work."

"You are too old for me, Monica! I don't know how you have crowded so much into your fifteen years —or is it sixteen?"

"I've lived with old men," she said, simply. "The young ones have no sense."

"And you are quite, quite sure you will never want to marry the handsome Manuel who tries to steal you?"

She looked at him, unsmiling, and shrugged her shoulders.

"I will shock you as I shocked the padre if I tell you what I would like to do to that handsome Manuel who sent me into the river today," she said; "still, I will tell you. I can't talk to my uncle, but I could always talk to you—you are not too good—it is the bad in me I always tell you of. You know, the father of Manuel was very rich. Manuel was sent to the schools and colleges. He was to be the great man of this valley, maybe governor some day, as his uncle was. Thousands of dollars were used to teach him all a fine man should know. Well, in the olive orchard back of the corrals, I found a thing horrible—a coyote in a trap with chains wrapped around it and hung on a tree limb. Under it a fire had been made and the coyote had been burned alive there because it had caught a chicken on the ranch when it was hungry. The handsome Manuel had done this—and all the colleges and all the teachers and all his regular days at the chapel services have not civilized him more than that! Yet he would steal a girl if he could, just as the coyote stole the chicken. And I—I tell you true—I would like to be the god of the coyote long enough to chain the handsome Manuel to that same place and make the fire."

"You awful young heathen! And you told the padre that?"

"Yes, when he came to tell me how well it would

be if I would enter holy church, and marry Manuel."

Her visitor sighed and shook his head as he stared at her.

"You are certainly leaving me no illusions of gentle maidenhood to build on," he said, at last. "I see now why Don Lee calls you a boy and a rebel. And you think you want to be an artist?"

She nodded silently.

"Is there anything else you want very much?"

"Yes, for my uncle to get well, and for we two to go far away where my mother lived. The women here know no more at seventy than at seventeen. I want to know things, to work, to do things. But the doctor has said he could not live long—so—we never can go."

"Monica, would you go with me?"

"Where?"

"Out into the world you want, to the schools you want."

"How could that be?" Her eyes were wide and alight, yet wistful.

"It is true you do not yet know what you want to pray for. When I say I will open the door for you, you almost look as if you are afraid to go out of your cage."

"Yes, I think I am afraid," she said. "All at once I felt so—it was foolish. How could you open the door?"

"There are two ways," he said, slowly. "Don Lee

has talked of one of them. He wants me to take care of you when he is gone."

She was no longer moulding the olla, but seated beside the irrigation ditch let her hands trail idly in the clear water.

"I would rather it was you," she said. "I thought it would be the padre, and the troubles of the padre would be many. He is against all the things I want to do, and that would be bad. But you have no home, no wife, no children. Where would you take me?"

He noted there was neither protest nor eagerness—a sort of still acceptance of the situation. All alone she had no doubt imagined many worse things than to go away into the unknown with this man who had brought her dolls and candies in other days.

"No," he said, affirming her statement as to his lack of household. "I have only some girl cousins and some aunts. When you go with me we can arrange a school perhaps until we see further through the open door. Don Lee thought if you would marry me some day it would be well, but since listening to your ideas of marriage with your more attractive young lover here, I can't hope much. But it is for you to say—you must decide."

"To marry you, really!" and her eyes widened again. "Maria and all the girls say no man would marry me but Manuel, and that he is bewitched. How furious Maria would be!"

Wayne rolled a cigarette and watched her. She was refreshing in her utter elimination of himself.

"Yes, Maria would probably not like to be a false prophetess, or to have the Cinderella marry as well as the Beauty, for Maria has always been looked upon as the beauty; but, putting Maria out of the question, what would you say?"

"I never liked married folks as well as separate people," she observed. "I would like to be your wife, yet I would like to live like what uncle calls me, a boy, or a comrade. I can't say it very well, maybe. I want to work, to study, to be the things they say I *can't* be—and—and you might not want that sort of wife."

"Yet you'd rather be my wife than be an adopted daughter?"

"You see, I could not be either *really*," she said, thoughtfully. "It would always be like playing 'pretend' as I used to play 'mother' when you brought me a doll. I guess that's the best way I can say it. I want just to be comrade; but I will marry you to go away, and be free."

"All right, it's a bargain. I guess it will be a good deal for me in the life game. We will join hands for mutual protection against the Manuels and other handsome creatures. Yet we will be free chums to follow our own trails. You will develop into an artistic genius, and I will feel puffed up with pride because I could open the door for you!"

She smiled at his extravagant picture, it helped bridge over a brief period of embarrassment. To say that she wanted him to marry her, yet did not want to be his wife—not to be a wife to any one, ever—was a difficult thing to make clear. What she had observed of mated couples during her brief life had not tended to cultivate domestic instincts.

"Diego Miguel has been more to me than the white people," she said, as she covered the olla with a wet cloth before leaving the old man at his work alone. "May I tell him?"

The old Indian had only caught the names in their conversation, as he spoke no English, and had politely effaced himself during their long and strange talk; but now, when the girl gravely spoke to him in Spanish, he stared in amazement at Wayne, scrambled to his feet to make his best bow, then lifted his brown hands over the girl in blessing, while the tears ran down his furrowed cheeks.

She wiped them away, and interpreted his broken sentences.

"He has been terribly afraid for me here, and knows he is too old to help," she said, "and now he asks me to say he will trust you, and will never be afraid any more!"

"Oh, say, I was not expecting this sort of thing; tell him not to worry like that."

"But he is weeping because he is happy—can't you see? He thinks you and I should weep with him.

Also he wants to know when the wedding will be."

"That's a neglected fact. If we marry we will certainly be obliged to have a wedding. You say when —or shall we ask Don Lee?"

"You can ask him, and I will get my mother's wedding dress. Uncle Lee will say whatever I say, and I won't have the padre! The alcalde can marry people, and at once I will show Maria that some one will marry me without witchcraft!"

"I am not so sure of that myself," said Wayne, half laughing, half nettled that the thought of the jealousy of Maria was doing quite a good deal towards hastening his nuptials. "You have told me all the unattractive things possible of yourself and wind up by telling me I can arrange for the wedding '*pronto*'— if that is not witchcraft it is close kindred to it!"

CHAPTER III

THE moons, and even the years, slipped into the past so quickly in the busy life of McLane Sargent, that he woke up one day to discover the fact that his excellent work had won him the approval of the discriminating reader, but that his hold on the heart of the people, the responsive, impulsive heart, had never been complete until in an hour of fortune he came across his notes of the little journey along the old Mexican coast, and to help out an editorial friend hammered it into form for a rush order.

Something had gone wrong, a novelette intended for a first place had developed something hazy as to authorship—was a "borrowed" translation instead of an original—altogether there was trouble in the air, and a substitute needed, and needed, as his friend the editor stated, in a little less than no time.

And these were the conditions under which Sargent finally developed the story he had said he would write some day of his woman under the mission arches.

"I don't know that I developed it at all," he stated afterwards. "The thing sort of wrote itself."

Time was not given him in which to think; he only recorded pictures unconsciously preserved, impressions absorbed and long forgotten, tones and intonations

alluring in the soft Spanish. The woman of the lilies became the incarnate spirit of tragedy—all the more so that she put forth no voluntary call for help of the world.

And for the man, her master, the objective mind of Sargent had almost forgotten what he had said he would like to do to that unknown demagogue of the mission valley, but his subjective mind remembered every jot and tittle of it; and through the nights of the years it had grown in the silence until the food it gave his imagination was meat for men, so much so that his friend fairly shouted with glee as the pages slipped through his fingers, and he grasped the fact that it was a sledge-hammer idea Sargent was "getting across," though on the surface it appeared only the sorrowful romance of one soft-voiced woman of great eyes and red lips and a shrine in a little, unknown valley.

The public agreed with the editor: it was a heart-gripping love of which he had, almost unconsciously, written, a vital thing—so vital that men looked at him curiously and wondered where he got all that insight—and that woman—a saint-like devotee from whom more fortunate sisters would draw aside their chaste skirts! She was truly of the half-light of life, not of the deep darkness—quite—but never, never belonging to the world of sunshine!

He had made her royal in love, enthroned her, the woman of shadows; and in the dust below her the

man who was her master followed the lure of gold, of worldly power, of every visible token needed by a strong animal to prove to itself that it is supreme, and does dominate.

And in the end — what?

The biggest thing his life had touched was a love so great that it had remained ever beyond and above his own comprehension. She was his as some captive queen might have been the slave of some victorious Goth, yet the Goth would become a god if seen through Love's eyes, and the chains of the woman of the twilight were forged thus — of the only gold which endures and creates though the fires of suns darken, and the planets live their lives and die, and every material husk of the world's greatness crumbles and becomes dust for the growth of new things. And above and beyond all, the spirit of Love brooded untouched by the world's standards, and in the form of this one woman knelt ever before a symbol of the Spirit.

Despite his statement that the thing wrote itself — this was the result of an hour or two under the arches of the old California mission — it had brought him a sort of fame surprising to himself — and the letters!

He had never dreamed there were so many women, and men, too, for whom the confessional was an actual need, at least once in their lives — if quite certain the confessor would never guess identities.

And there were others!

And out of it grew that tender, shadowed title for

the sister woman who loves — not too well, who could? but in a way not worldly wise. It had become an addition to their vocabulary until his fiancée, Elinor Mitford, added to every written note to him, "Any new Woman of the Twilight on your trail?"

He was not sure that he liked it any more than he liked Gilman's query as to whether he was going to blossom out a bally preacher and then strike for a political job when his following was secure. Other queries of the same sort came his way until fame did not seem an unalloyed blessing; yet it would be difficult to voice an actual discontent.

Independent, with good health, youth, a name already made in books, a charming girl who was to marry him some day — if she did not change her mind — and all the world yet to range in, his outlook on life should have all the rosy hues of earthly hope.

Yet he had done no work for weeks, and was an aimless, restless wanderer when the powers that be, aided by Nell, guided his steps towards the cottage of her aunt, Mrs. J. Hamilton Dacy, at Dacy's harbor, on the Massachusetts coast.

"You see, Lane," said that practical young lady, "I am in for trouble ever since I quit playing with Tony Allen; and now that a new engagement is announced, you might as well brace up and help me face the music. They are all terribly proud of you and your success, and they make it clear that I shall have to do some mental hustling to keep up to your standards;

but just the same we will have to adjust ourselves to a family meeting sooner or later, and I 'd rather have it over."

"What do they — the family council — usually do to your latest selections?" asked Sargent, lazily. "Your Aunt Dacy seemed satisfied. I think, I really think, Nell, that she made the engagement."

"She did not! Lane, you know she did not. I always liked you tremendously, so, when Anthony Allen quarreled with me — about nothing (for I never did care for Tom Guyon) — and your unknown illustrator found herself a husband — well, I think it was just Fate, Lane Sargent."

"I 'm willing to think it, Nellie," he agreed, stroking her white, ringed hand, "but, for heaven's sake, don't drag in the woman question. No woman had anything to do with it but you."

"That 's nice, and I guess you believe it, Lane," she said, with a quaint grimace; "but *I* never drove you to drink because I would n't write you. We both have let each other's letters go unanswered for ages and lost no sleep over it, and if I *had* married Tony Allen —"

"But you did n't, Nell. You quarreled with him like the little tyrant you are, and then came and wept on my shoulder."

"It 's a nice shoulder, and you are *such* a comfort, Lane," said his fiancée. "You know, I did fairly

wrestle with my conscience over Tony — tried Theosophy, New Thought, and Christian Science to reconcile myself to the idea that nothing in this life really did count for much, and I might as well give up earthly hope and be an old maid; but it was all no use, habit was too strong for me. And you know, Lane," she added, after a season of pensive thought, "no matter what any of the highbrows try to tell a girl, there is no religion quite so comforting as the right man."

McLane Sargent shouted with laughter, and rolled on the grass above the little strip of shore, then sat up and flipped pebbles at the girl, and his gray eyes twinkled at the thought of her wrestling with a conscience.

"If I'm a comfort, you are a joy, Nell," he decided, "so I guess it won't trouble us much what the relatives say. Of course, I haven't Allen's money—"

"But you can make some of your own," she interrupted. "And, speaking of money, Lane, did your unknown woman ever accept the money for those illustrations of your 'Woman of the Twilight'?"

The color flushed into Sargent's face, and he sent the pebbles skimming over the water instead of towards the girl.

"Can't you let that rest, Nell? I've been having hades with the publisher over it. They wanted to make advertising material out of the fact that the artist was an unknown, that she is a rare genius, that she submitted the pictures because of some sentimen-

tal or tragic interest for her in the story; oh, there was no end to the use they could make of the theme if they could only surround it with mystery."

"Well, why not? All they would have to do is to tell the truth. None of you do know who the artist is. Didn't you try to follow up the only address given and—land in a negro section of town! Say, Lane, did you ever tell the publishers that?" and she giggled, —"talk about a shadowy mystery, did you?"

"No, I didn't, and I would not have told you if I had been sober."

Instead of resenting his bluntness, the girl laughed and held up her finger accusingly.

"Didn't I tell you she drove you to a desperate state? Honest, Lane, how does it seem to fall in love with a girl you never saw—a dream girl?"

"I think the visible ones are safer," and he reached for her hand and missed it as she drew back; "but please remember you are the only person who ever mentioned that tender passion in connection with the dream girl. *I* certainly never did."

"You did not have to," retorted Miss Mitford. "I have known you too long to be wrong. You fairly radiated affection for all the world—you were even affectionate to me! The days when her letters came were days of joy—in regard to art, of course—and when the last letter came you went—slump—into the depths."

"Nell, can't you let the *post mortems* alone?" asked

the man, irritably. "I am not in the depths now; and you know, little girl, I have never dug up your former engagements, or questioned you of Allen."

"No need, you knew all about it—always. Why, you just couldn't stir up a mystery concerning any one like Tony Allen. But a wonderful woman who paints your dreams, and even talks to you on paper, and hides behind a brush name or a Chinese symbol, and then—Lane, really and truly, didn't you end by writing her love letters?"

"Really and truly, would I tell you if I had?"

"Well, you did something definite and desperate to scare her into retreat, and you won't even tell me her name."

"I tell you I never knew it. The illustrations were signed by a symbol instead of a name. The letter with them gave a name avowedly assumed, and an address where no white people lived. That is all I know. She is not in the field for other illustrative work, and all one meets if he tries to search her out is a very blank wall."

"I notice you don't tell me whether she kept or returned the money you sent for the drawings."

Again Sargent's face flushed, and for a moment his eyes looked hard.

"She kept it," he stated, in the brief, clipped manner Nell had learned marked the limit of his patience; "she closed the episode with that very business-like act. The whole thing is dead and buried except for

the fact that my new book has a set of illustrations remarkable for their truth, also their beauty. She painted the things I only thought and did not even fully describe. I feel like a cad to think I even spoke of it to any one — even you."

"You wouldn't if you had suspected how it would end," said Nell, consolingly, slipping her hand through his arm, "but of course you couldn't know."

"No, I couldn't know," he agreed. "Shall we go back to the house? I see Gilman's auto, and your aunt on the terrace."

"Yes, she is looking this way. Aunt Martha is happy because she thinks we are out here spooning. You know, she still has her doubts as to whether I have given our engagement the proper amount of prayerful consideration."

"Strange!" and Sargent smiled down in her eyes — blue, quick, darting eyes, roguish and alert. She smiled back at him in frank comradeship, and a certain pride in his possession. It *was* nice to have the celebrity of the season for one's very own!

CHAPTER IV

ON the terrace there were more than Gilman and their hostess, Mrs. Dacy. George Hallet, the law partner of Hamilton Dacy, was there, a fine, clean-cut man, blonde, frank, and very much at home. He was bantering Gilman about an inheritance suit they were managing for that lucky individual. Gilman had been left quite a little money by one distant relative, and stood a good chance to win an old and very large plantation in the South from the estate of a grand-uncle of whom he had known next to nothing until recently.

"Yet he says life is commonplace, and that romance has died out of the land," said Nell, shaking hands with Hallet. "*I* call that flinging slander in the face of Lane's new book. I am sure *that* is romance, poetry, and tragedy, all three."

"Yes," retorted Gilman, "but I had to steer him to find it, and then he nearly flunked. There was not enough romance in the whole thing to make him remember it until Gordon begged him to dig up something, anything, quick! and he did a spurt and dressed up that old mission group to fill in space. Romance! go down there and slosh around in the adobe mud in the wet season, or fight the sand fleas in the dry sea-

son, and see how much romance you find. He just had a pipe dream and got it on paper while the smoke still curled."

"Come over here and talk to me about it, Gillie," said Miss Mitford, invitingly. "You know, Lane has never told any of us just which mission he described in that story. I thought I knew all about it till I heard there were other San Juans. Why this mystery?"

"Level head Lane had," commented Gilman, seated in the pergola between the two ladies, while the other men went inside. "He got in a lot of local politics, Indian slavery, and thefts of altar treasures—all true, you know, but likely to cause hurt feelings if the actors were definitely located or named. His local color and facts were all correct, it is only the attributes he gives his woman to which I object. He never even spoke to a woman in the place. The woman and the romance of that story are made up out of the whole cloth."

"Well," said Sargent's fiancée, with a little sigh and smile, "he won me with it."

"Elinor"—and the tone of Mrs. Dacy was corrective—"how can you pretend that so serious a matter as marriage was the result of a mere written romance?"

"But I'm not married yet, Aunt Martha, I am only engaged, and it is so new that I am still giving myself reasons for it."

"I should think the personality of McLane Sargent is reason enough," stated Mrs. Dacy coldly. "I do not at all approve of the flippant manner of the younger set towards such serious matters of life."

"Tell that to Lane," suggested Lane's fiancée. "It is he who has written a thrilling story of a pious half-worldling. I can't quite see, Aunt Martha, how your conscience can really welcome him into the family; think how frivolous he must have been some time to even imagine the life of a woman of the twilight."

"Elinor! I should think in the presence of a gentleman you would—"

"No, I wouldn't," laughed her niece. "If royalties from the book are to furnish our bread and butter, why ignore the literary staff of life? Of course, if it had been a failure we would all have slated the author as a sacrilegious, improper person; but since it sells like hot cakes—well, our thrifty Yankee souls have to compromise with conscience."

"The Sargents could marry anywhere," stated Mrs. Dacy. "No one could use the word improper in regard to a Sargent."

"Then they have us beat in a walk," retorted her irrepressible niece. "Gillie, though you have quit work, and are a howling swell, I'll wager you know quite a good deal of the live scandals vetoed by newspaper editors or owners. What is the latest about my interesting cousin Glyn? Whose wife has he eloped with last?"

"Elinor! I hope you do not express yourself in that way to Lane. It is not fair to our family. Neither Lane nor his mother have ever met Glyndon, and since his life is lived abroad of late, there is little chance that he will ever return here. It seems to me that Glyndon's life is strictly a family affair."

"Whose family?" asked her niece, as Mrs. Dacy clicked her knitting needles irritably, and Gilman laughed.

"Don't mind me, Mrs. Dacy," he begged. "Miss Mitford knows I don't count as one of the vast public, and of course all the movements of men as wealthy as Mr. Wayne are sure to be chronicled and enlarged upon."

"That is exactly what I say," agreed Mrs. Dacy. "If Glyndon had not made a fortune in those Nevada mines—"

"You would still be slipping cash to him out of your housekeeping funds," interrupted Nell. "I'd like to know what there is about a handsome rake to make the most proper of grandmas and aunties open their purse strings, to say nothing of fond mammas? Glyn Wayne has been the special pet of some woman as far back as I can remember, and the Nevada money of course has made him impossible."

"I still think he could have been reformed by the right woman," and Mrs. Dacy sighed and shook her head sadly. "His marriage was a great mistake."

"Yes, for his wife."

"Of course, it is not pleasant for her, either," agreed the other lady, with an evident desire to be fair, "but Glyndon should have married a home-loving, domestic girl of our own set. Southern girls do not understand our New England men."

"Gracious! Aunt Martha, Glyn is *not* New England, he is the universal untrammelled male creature spoiled by doting women because he is handsome—or was."

"Well," sighed Mrs. Dacy, resignedly, gathering up her knitting and arising to join other guests, "every man needs a home of his own, and his wife might have been a great force for good if she accepted her wifely duties in a Christian spirit, and realized that woman has a great mission in life in the actual salvation of such men. Glyndon was a dear, pretty boy—and such a nice manner."

"There you have all the requisites, Gillie," said Miss Mitford, scoffingly. "Cultivate beauty, a nice manner, and no morals to speak of, and you can carry our purse if you only fling us a smile occasionally! Aunt Martha always makes me feel like a naughty child with her prunes and prisms. To tell the truth, our men have always been wild, and Aunt Martha knows it. But the women of the family have always clubbed together to hide it on fathers and husbands and sons. I can't blame the men. Just think of gen-

erations of Aunt Marthas making homes happy with framed texts on the walls, and a quilting bee or prayer meeting for diversion!"

Gilman grinned at the picture suggested, and jotted down something in a red notebook.

"What about the girls?" he asked. "Can't you speak for yourself, John?"

"Oh, when I just boil with temper over some of the mundane trifles of life I realize it is the smothered rage of several of my grandmothers who tried to subdue their natural instincts by prayer. You can laugh, but there is a lot of truth in it. I can just fancy a nice domestic wife curbing those inherited instincts of Glyn Wayne! How in the world *could* his wife accept her wifely duties in a Christian spirit, when he had left for Europe with another woman before his wife had finished school? Aunt Martha is good as gold herself, but her logic is peculiar when applied to Glyn. What are you writing?"

Gilman finished his page and closed the little book.

"I am starting in a thoroughly scientific way to make records for a book," he announced.

"About what, a novel?"

"Don't know yet, only making human notes until I get enough real things, real ideas of real people, then I will decide what I shall use them for. I see so much hit-and-miss work going into print that I am going to start on a solid basis."

"Good boy! Now that you have all sorts of money,

you can afford to do a real thing—if it takes a lifetime. I promise to utter only high and holy thoughts when you are around. That notebook will strike me dumb."

They both laughed at the unlikelihood of such a calamity, and then instead of joining the others in the house Nell surveyed his new car approvingly, and said something about the good road along the shore, and a little later they were gliding under the shadow of the old elms northward where the moorland reached to the cliff above the water and an occasional tree broke the monotony of the wide pastures, or the thickets of sumac or clambering vines. The storms of winters gave little encouragement to growth of timber.

"I hope you come early and often, Gillie," stated the girl with a sigh, as they whirled along the lane of blossoming things. "Your car is a dream. I scarcely regret even Tony's boat when in this. And if you are turning literary I will need more than ever to cultivate you."

"Worth working for," decided Gilman, grimly.

"Don't be sarcastic, I'm really, truly in earnest. I almost lie awake nights trying to fit myself into the new scheme of things. Aunt Martha is disgusted with me, but you know what an ocean of difference there is between Tony and Lane."

"Quite a bit," agreed Gilman.

"Yes, poor Tony always went asleep over any kind of a book—only reads the racing news—so no girl

had to tire herself out trying to keep up to *his* mental stunts. But I'm likely to need help to keep in line with Lane, and you must be the help, Gillie, so please get literary quick as you can, and then let me bask in the light of your countenance."

"What's the matter with Lane's countenance?" asked Gilman.

"Not a thing," declared Lane's fiancée, loyally, "he is the best ever, but he thinks I know a lot more than I do, and I guess I will have to take a correspondence course in wifely training before I am fit for the job. You see, I didn't have to study to keep up to Tony, I could have spent money as fast as he could—and that's all he has to do."

Gilman chuckled at the idea of the correspondence course, and announced his willingness to be the co-respondent, at which Miss Mitford dared him to say it before Aunt Martha, and they chaffed each other as they spun along the shore where the moorland reached back in sunny silence to Squaw River, and the surf beat high against the rocky ribs of the coast.

"I hate this especial curve of the shore," she said, pointing to the white foam curling over brown boulders; "that entire bay is full of treachery. You know, Tony does know a boat, yet he was all but battered to death out there last year when Monica was here—got caught in a hopeless gulf, and a squall did the rest. The lightship men saved him, but the boat was only fit for kindling by the time it reached shore. I was

scared silly, for we could see it all from yonder point. After that, Monica would not rest until she had a boat of her own moored here in case of accident; but I don't see what she could do with a boat in that wrathy water when Tony failed. There is her bungalow; let's go up."

"But I understood you to say she is in town, or was in the South?"

"Oh, I never know. She won't write letters, nor do any of the other civil conventional things, but she is a dear! I don't blame her that she won't join the family parties at Aunt Martha's; in fact, I think it is nice of her to even have a summer studio within hailing distance; it shows that she bears the family no grudge for Glyn's actions, and that is as much as one could expect—more."

A seldom used road led up from the highway to a little bungalow of concrete in the midst of some gnarled old trees. There was a decided foreign note in the Moorish chimney, tiled roof, and the built-in concrete seats, wide and long, at each end of the veranda.

An old man was clipping the grass along the edge of the tile walk in the leisurely manner of one who has the entire summer to accomplish a task, and he shook his head at Miss Mitford's query as to the owner of the house, and held his hand to his ear in evidence of deafness.

"No, there ain't no folks here yet, don't know any

mor'n that; never do know till they drive up. Am my own boss, I am. Nothen to do but just keep the leaves and the litter cleared up, dassent touch a tree or vine. Miss Wayne, she likes them wild like they are—curious notions. I could make a right smart place of this if she'd let me cut out them trees and make a flower patch for her. If it wa n't for these old stunted trees you could see this place miles out at sea. It would show up mighty fine—but she's the captain. The place looks a hundred years old a'ready, with all this jungle around it—no fault of mine. I'd have it ship shape in no time, but she won't hear to it."

He further informed them that he lived in a little cabin in a cove to the south, and that he was not too old to take a run out with the fishermen occasionally, though for the most part he stayed in port, and tinkered around for the neighbors, when he had a job.

"And Mrs. Wayne has sent no word about coming?" shouted the girl in his ear; but he shook his head.

"Never does. That wench of hers did come out a day ahead last year, an' that's all the notice *I* got! Maybe cut this grass all summer and not a foot to walk on it. It would pay her better to rent it—lots of city folks would give her a good price—but she's the captain."

The two visitors sat under the trees, and looked out over the restless waves, landlocked in part by a high cliff far to the south, and the long low reef, like

a dark finger reaching out through the foam on the north. The tide was coming in, and Elinor Mitford confessed it made her homesick for the boat parties Nan and Tony Allen gave in other summers. Of course, she could not expect their boat in these waters this year.

"Why not?" demanded Gilman. The fact that we all love you, and Sargent won you, has not kept me away. Who is Allen, that he should arise in protest? The fact is, Nanny intimated to me that they meant to sail up the coast to Boothbay Harbor."

"To Boothbay! We were all there together last year; it was ideal. You are making me more homesick every minute."

"Better have a bad case and get it over with," suggested Gilman. "There are two pretty girls to be with them — sea sirens."

"Nanny has n't sent me a single letter since Tony quarreled with me," complained the girl, "and I suppose when they learn I 'm engaged to Lane she never will bring her party our way."

"She might if she thought it would not jar you."

"Well, it would n't. I 'd fall on their necks with joy. They are always such a jolly lot, and, you know, Gillie, it is not always easy to find a jolly lot in Aunt Martha's house, or to keep them there when you do get them. I 've only been engaged to Lane a week and already she is doing her best to get us both in line with her standards of matrimony — fairly preaches at

us! I don't wonder Lane makes an excuse to get back to town with George Hallet tomorrow."

"In that case I'd better hie homewards with his bride-elect lest Aunt Martha have dire suspicions of elopement," suggested Gilman. "I mean to come often, so I want to keep in that lady's good graces. Did Sargent see this?" he asked, with a sweep of the hand taking in the woods, the dwelling, and the restless sea, "it's a dandy picture."

"No, we have gone the other roads or else out in the motor boat. This is his first visit to Uncle Dacy's cottage. I knew him ages ago through his sister at school, but my various uncles and cousins and aunts are practically strangers to him. It's a horrid bore having them look him over and appraise him."

"And compare him with the might-have-beens," suggested Gilman.

"Exactly; but worse than that, to have him weigh and measure them without them ever suspecting what the result might tot up! You know, our family, with all their self-esteem and local importance, never really did anything in the world but make money."

"Fascinating occupation."

"Of course, but just the same I think it is one of the reasons Aunt Martha welcomed a Sargent so quickly into the family, and it is one of the reasons she is just a little hurt that Glyn's wife threw Glyn aside like an old shoe—or rather like a new, cheap shoe that didn't fit. You know, Monica Sturtevante has a fam-

ily tree fairly dangling with crowns and coronets and swords of great fighters. Poor as poverty, you know, after the war, and prouder of the poverty than of the family tree, I guess. Altogether, it hurts Aunt Martha that a Wayne could be dropped like that, and in a condescending way."

"But I understood it was the other way around—the husband who hit the trail."

"So it was; married Monica and left her in school down South, and a year later left America with another woman. We, the family, didn't even know he had a wife till later. He made a stack of money about that time, and I guess Aunt Martha was startled by several revelations (Uncle Dacy does keep a good many from her), but among the revelations the most astounding was a young and very indifferent wife! It is the indifference Aunt Martha can't understand. If she would only weep on our shoulders or pity herself or pose as a forsaken bride, she could have a little court of admirers and sympathizers, but she only smiles, and works, and ignores Glyn."

"Any question of divorce?"

"She ignores the subject, so Aunt Martha still has hopes of a reconciliation."

"Does he want that?"

"Not that I've heard of; it's three years now since he has been in America. We never hear of him except when he is doing something extra lurid. He certainly is on the down trail."

"Ye — yes, I heard of him in Italy," commented Gilman, and the eager questions of the girl were cut short by the car gliding over the green of the lawn and bringing them to the steps where Sargent and the others were chatting and waiting for the wanderers. Lunch was waiting, also the mail, and Elinor fairly pounced on an envelope addressed to Mrs. Dacy.

"From Nanny! Thank goodness, she does write to some of us; tell me quick, Aunt Martha."

"There is not much to tell," said Mrs. Dacy, with a slight lifting of her brows, meant to quell the eagerness of her niece. "She has a boat party as usual. Joe Dacy and your Uncle Hamilton are to join them at New Haven and make the trip along the coast. Of course, it means we must invite them here — I must say, Hamilton seems even more absent-minded than usual."

"But you know Nanny has come every blessed summer for ages," protested Nell, while Gilman chuckled, and the other two men smiled across the table at each other. Hallet knew so well the absent-mindedness of his partner, and Sargent knew so well that it would never occur to Nell not to invite any number of last summer's sweethearts if they came within hailing distance — that frankness of hers was her chief charm to him.

"Also," continued Miss Mitford, "I desire to be informed as to the sea sirens Nan and Tony have

aboard; you know, both Uncle Dacy and Joe are susceptible infants."

"You can read the letter," said Mrs. Dacy; "in fact, the letters. Mrs. Smythe-Orville is with them, and Lulu, her daughter. They each add a line."

"You mean her step-daughter. I fancy Fannie Smith is not too eager to have a sixteen-year-old daughter credited to her."

"Elinor!"

"Now, Aunt Martha, George at least knows that Frances Smythe-Orville was simply Mrs. Orvel Smith until she went abroad. It's a big question mark with me how some people can get away with a bluff like that. Of course, any name she could pick would be an improvement on her original one of Dobbs—and that's your sea siren?" she said, addressing Gilman.

"I was only quoting Nanny Allen," he explained. "I have not the felicity of knowing the lady."

"Well," commented Nell, as she spread out the pages and glanced at the three different contributions to the letter, "I'm glad to see Lulu has acquired none of that particular sort of veneer. The big, round schoolgirl writing of Lulu Smith is a rest to the eyes, and a joy to the heart. She is a dear child."

"If you read the letter of Mrs. Smythe-Orville you will see that Lulu is scarcely a child. There is a man in the question, a count of something—what is the name, Elinor?"

Elinor glanced over a sheet covered with small, angular penmanship.

"Count of Castlemar," she announced. "I can just fancy the joy of Fannie in being able to write that as a sort of advance herald of her success abroad!"

She did not note that Hallet turned towards her quickly as she read the name, and that his tone was carefully careless as he asked the location of Castlemar.

"Oh, Fannie never gives details—'the very ancient estate of Castlemar on the Mediterranean,'" she quoted. "It never would occur to Fannie that the Mediterranean is quite a little pool. She would only see the pebble where she stood."

"Sixteen seems an absurd age for marriage," remarked Sargent. "It almost scares us even at our advanced age, doesn't it?" and he regarded the girl smilingly.

"It certainly does. I like nice, long engagements," she agreed. "One disastrous child marriage in our family is quite enough. I shall take it on myself to tell Fannie Smith of Monica Wayne."

"I fail to see the necessity," said Mrs. Dacy. "Monica met Lulu and her father here the first summer she came north, and was very fond of the child. If she wanted to confide her—ah—unfortunate marital affairs she has had every opportunity; and, candidly, I think you should remember, Elinor, that she has never actually confided in us."

Nell set down her tea-cup, regarded her aunt, and

then with her finger tips pressed on the dome of thought gave an exaggerated imitation of deep mental concentration.

"I guess you go up head, Aunt Martha," she conceded. "Monica never has had a confiding nature. Her lawyers," and she glanced at Hallet, "may know how and why she married Cousin Glyn, and why they took different trails; if so, we are an eager audience."

"I was not her lawyer then," said Hallet, gravely. "I only know that Glyndon Wayne was in Mexico for a while, and that her father died in Mexico. The marriage, I believe, really occurred in California, and from there she went direct to a school in Georgia."

"And we know little of the rest," added Miss Mitford. "I notice if any of us ever try to show special interest in the ante-Georgia days, Monica quietly folds her tent and slips away. We are her dear cousins, but we must not intrude."

"As a cousin-to-be, I am interested in your elusive lady," remarked Sargent. "Is her studio life the usual becoming pose for the detached woman, or is it the real thing?"

"If orders backed by substantial dollars are any indication, I should say it is the real thing," stated Hallet; "for a girl with less than three years' actual art work it is remarkable."

"Oh, well, she is art mad, just lives and works and dreams art," said Nell. "She uses every dollar she gets to pay for extra lessons—put in all last winter in

Spain working like a slave. No wonder she is getting orders!"

"I saw a note in last month's *Studio* to the effect that her designs were accepted for the stained glass windows of a new chapel in Manhattan," remarked Gilman; "also the entire color scheme for the interior decoration was given to her. That is going some for a young woman."

"I never can reconcile myself to the thought of Glyndon's wife working for money," declared Mrs. Dacy; "it is too absurd. One redeeming thing is that her work is, in a way, ecclesiastical."

"Yes, it helps take the curse off," agreed her niece; "but I guess that came to her through choosing the right father."

"Elinor!"

"Well, didn't she have all his drawings of those magnificent old Spanish-Mexican churches to start with? I should call that an unusual foundation for art study. You must see that collection some day, Lane—all sorts of Mexican and Indian things. She told me she had made duplicates in colors of every one of his drawings before she was fifteen; that should be equal to several seasons in an art school. Glyn will wake up some morning to learn he has a celebrity for a wife and want her back again. I can fairly hear the smashing time our joyous family will have then."

The men laughed, and Mrs. Dacy restrained herself to looking her disapproval. George Hallet, of

course, was as one of the family, and Gilman she did not consider, except as a client of the office, and a well-paying one; but Sargent was quite a different matter, and it surely should be worth Elinor's while to have him think the best of her family instead of thus dwelling on the most humiliating scandal the Waynes had known in a generation.

Down deep in her heart she was hoping that the bungalow in the woods by the shore would remain closed for the summer, and that Mrs. Smythe-Orville, or the Sargent family, would not learn the true inwardness of the situation. She could fancy the air and the lifted brows of Mrs. Smythe-Orville if Elinor should blurt out the ugly fact of a Sturtevante ignoring a Wayne as a thing too insignificant to even discuss! And Monica's youth would of course put Glyndon entirely in the wrong in most minds—which, to Mrs. Dacy, did not appear quite fair. Monica's ungirlish reserve led Mrs. Dacy at times to doubt whether Glyndon had not had his own troubles if all was but known.

When Hamilton Dacy, as Glyndon Wayne's lawyer, had gone down to some school in Georgia and brought back a remarkably cool, indifferent, and sarcastic bride of a year, the coolness and indifference seemed to Mrs. Dacy almost indecent, and she had never been able to change her first impression. Of course, the family influence had prevented a newspaper scandal, but that was as far as their influence

could reach. It could not even locate Glyndon half of the time, and it could not change a particle the mental attitude of Monica Wayne. Work was all she cared for—work and freedom. She was quite willing to be near her husband's family occasionally if they kept a respectful distance and did not presume to direct or advise. In her first interview with Mrs. Dacy she had stated that "families could be awful things," and that she did not mean to be a part of one. She had a passion for individual freedom which to Mrs. Dacy was not quite womanly—a thoroughly feminine creature was always naturally dependent.

Thus the hostess of Dacy's Harbor felt that if the Allen boat did anchor in their little bay she would have complexities enough for one woman to face for the summer, and that if Monica should elect to come to the north coast at the same time, her cup of trials would reach the brimming point. Keeping the scandal out of the papers would prove a useless expense if Fannie Smythe-Orville got to know the details!

She excused herself directly lunch was over, and retired to her room to frame a night dispatch to her husband; not that it would do any real good, but it would show him how inconsiderate he had been to bring Tony Allen as a guest at this particular time, and incidentally she would sleep better. Elinor had expressed so many tactless thoughts during the day that the poor lady felt the need of some one to express herself to—it is one of the real comforts of having a husband.

CHAPTER V

TWO weeks later she scarcely felt more relieved or at ease concerning the yachting group and its effect on her own household. In fact, as she came from a drive to the village, she was met by a slight, pale young girl, wearing a sewing apron, who assisted the butler in taking parcels from the carriage, and added the last straw to the situation when she announced with a little smile, timid, yet joyous—

"Mrs. Wayne is home again. She called just after you drove away."

"Called!" repeated Mrs. Dacy; "is she making calls on her way from the depot? I did not pass her."

"Oh, she's been home two days. They came Thursday."

"Well, upon my word!" Mrs. Dacy was plainly chagrined, and halted on the steps to turn to the girl following her with the smaller parcels. "I should think your grandfather might have brought us word; he knows Mrs. Wayne has no messenger but old Rosa, who is afraid to come through the pasture."

"I know," said the girl, looking at her mistress helplessly for an instant, and then lowering her gaze, "but he—I don't know, Mrs. Dacy—but—"

"You don't mean to tell me, Hetty Craig, that he is drinking again."

The girl nodded her head.

"I—I don't think he meant to, Mrs. Dacy. Some of the fishermen got him to go out in a boat—and—they had liquor when they came back. And—they had no right to!" she added, with sudden passion. "They know, they all know, he can't stand it as they do, and he can't stop as they do!"

"I am surprised, Hetty, to hear you take that tone," said Mrs. Dacy. "I should think you would be the last to excuse such habits after all we had done to give him employment. Of course he can stop it if he wants to."

The girl said no more, but passed up the stairs with an anxious, troubled face, and Mrs. Dacy stood for a few moments looking after the carriage on its way to the stables, hesitating whether to recall it and drive to the bungalow—it would seem a civil thing to do. Yet Monica had not chosen to notify the family of her coming, and, after all—

She concluded by untying her bonnet strings and ringing for a maid, who told her Mrs. Wayne had walked over from the bungalow, and said she would go down to the shore on the chance of meeting Miss Elinor.

While they spoke of it, and the maid relieved her of bonnet and gloves, there was the clatter of horse

and wheels, and Mrs. Dacy with a sigh of relief went herself to the hall door.

"I never was so glad to see you, George," she said, graciously. "To think that you had to drive from the station in that hired trap when our own carriage had only just returned from the village! Come right in. If you had given me any hope of your coming I should have gone to the station, but, you know, you said it was next to impossible to get away."

"I found I needed to make it possible," said Hallet, "and here I am. The place looked sort of lonesome as I drove up—where are the folks?"

"I haven't an idea," stated Mrs. Dacy, desperately. "I declare I scarcely see a member of this family from breakfast until sundown since Tony Allen brought his new yacht into our harbor. They fish or sail all day and every day, and Hamilton Dacy is quite as childish about it as Joe and Lulu."

Hallet smiled in his genial, quieting way, but with full realization of Mrs. Dacy's perplexities under the circumstances.

"So Tony is still in the harbor? Any sign of sailing north?"

"Not the slightest; he seems perfectly satisfied with second place, and is behaving beautifully, which is more than I can say for Elinor. I am at my wits' end, and have telegraphed for Lane; he will get here this evening."

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"Any new people in their party?" asked Hallet, with the evident desire to get her mind off the flirtations of Elinor.

"No. Waddell Gilman is here still; and George, he is talking plays now instead of the great American novel for which he was gathering notes. He seems to me peculiar enough already without starting to write things for the theaters. I never could quite comprehend how a Sargent, especially McLane Sargent, could find pleasure in a personality so—well, eccentric."

"Oh, Gilman is a good chap, Mrs. Dacy."

"Of course, I suppose he is, in fact every one likes him; but I give you my word, there is not a servant on the place or a fisherman on the shore he does not get notes from. I know Tony and Elinor make up all sorts of senseless puns to get them into Gilman's notebooks."

"When we win that inheritance suit for him he will forget the drama and raise prize pigs and pumpkins on that old plantation. How are the Smythe-Orvilles?"

"Fannie is raving over Italy, but I think they spent every dollar and had to come back. She is wild to get that Castlemar man in the family, and will take Lulu back there next winter. She says the man has money, but I think it is difficult to tell about people over there."

The girl Hettie came from the servants' entrance and passed the end of the veranda, halting undecidedly as she noted that Mrs. Dacy was not alone.

"Well, Hettie, what is it?"

"Only, will you please excuse me, Mrs. Dacy, long enough to go down to—the cove? I finished the sewing."

"Yes, you can go, but don't stay long. It is Mary's day out and the young ladies may need you when they come."

"Good evening, Hettie," said Hallet, cheerily. "I hope all goes well at the cove."

"Thank you, Mr. Hallet," said the girl, with a wan smile, and Hallet looked after her in silence for a bit, and then turned to Mrs. Dacy.

"I notice she does not commit herself to a statement," he remarked. "How is that ancient mariner of ours?"

"Almost worthless, and the girl wastes so much time looking after him, and waiting on him, that she is growing about as useless as he. I have continued to employ her because reliable help is difficult to secure in these shore places, but—"

Her unfinished sentence and weary expression denoted that her patience had almost reached the limit.

"Poor little girl!" said Hallet, kindly, "and poor little Lulu destined for the marriage market! Why don't you take Nell's advice and warn them by the story of Monica Wayne's schoolgirl marriage?"

"George!" exclaimed Mrs. Dacy, "I really did hope for some help from you, yet you advise that? No, indeed, I've worked too hard to keep that scandal

hidden. It would be so much easier if Monica had not taken up that crazy art fad—the wife of Glyndon Wayne working for money! I have no patience with her."

"Well," said Hallet, slowly, knowing the annoyance he was likely to cause this woman whose house had been as a second home to him, "if she heeds me she will not be his wife much longer."

"George!"

"He wants a divorce."

"*He* wants a divorce?" Her tone was incredulous and her face was one of dismay. To have this question come up at this special time was a new calamity beyond words.

Hallet nodded and smiled at the irony of it.

"Yes, concludes he is not happy as the gods meant him to be. He wants to get married again, wants to come back to America, wants his wife to apply for the divorce, and wants us to manage the legal details. Will you help us?"

Mrs. Dacy fairly gasped as she saw her one bulwark of strength slipping away from her.

"I am astonished, George Hallet, that you should ask such a question. I certainly will not help. I have always hoped to see them reunited."

"But since that is one of the most improbable things?"

"*Why* should it be improbable?" demanded Mrs. Dacy. "Other women have always been infatuated

with Glyndon — he is a charming man! Monica goes wherever she pleases in this craze of hers for art study; what more natural than that some day she should reach some European point where he chanced to be — and adjust their little difficulties?"

Hallet eyed her smilingly, and yet hopelessly. Never in the world would Mrs. Dacy see the question except as she meant to see it.

"Little difficulties! Have you forgotten that one of the difficulties is a substantial and charming woman of whom society was once fond? Her husband died last year; she is now legally free."

"I am not at all concerned with her affairs; she has openly placed herself beyond recognition," returned Mrs. Dacy, impatiently, "but I have several times thought of writing concerning Monica's erratic wanderings. Glyndon could so easily have chanced to meet her in Spain last winter — only she seldom tells any of us where she goes until after her return — and she never writes letters."

"I don't think it occurs to her," said Hallet, "she lives so much within her own work and plans; and you know none of us are really deeply interested in art. I guess we miss a good deal," he added, half sadly.

"I can't agree with you. My observation shows me that an artist in the family almost always turns it topsy turvey, especially a woman artist. Please touch that bell for me — we need tea if we are going to take different sides of this question. As to Glyndon," she

resumed, "I certainly would have written to him when Monica was abroad, but I did not know his address. I only know he is living in Europe somewhere under an assumed name, and that's all I do know. Hamilton Dacy keeps all his knowledge of Glyndon under lock and key."

"Good trait in a lawyer," commented Hallet, but Mrs. Dacy gave him a disdainful glance as she handed him his cup of tea.

"Lawyer!" she repeated. "You know perfectly well, George, that if he had not inherited his interest in that legal concern he never would have owned it. You do all the real work of the firm."

"Someone has to do it," he said, sipping his tea and watching Mrs. Dacy and thinking that his partner had evidently failed in his opportunities to assist in the social affairs of the summer. Then he added, quite irrelevantly, "How does she look? Well, I hope."

"Who, Monica? I haven't even seen her. She has the most peculiar way of slipping in quietly or saying 'good-night,' and you hear of her next in Mexico! I presume she joined the others at the shore, or took out a boat herself if they were gone. I can't persuade her that it is dangerous to go out alone as she does; anything might happen."

"But nothing does," remarked Hallet, reassuringly, as he rose and walked to the end of the veranda and stood looking down towards the shore. "I think, if you don't mind, I'll go down and play shepherd for

your scattered flock; evidently Dacy is not an active guardian."

"One would fancy him the youngest of the group when he catches a bigger fish than Joe. Do start them home; they would loiter until moonrise if left alone."

But before he had reached the pergola he heard voices raised in song and the twanging of a banjo. A minute later he could see the lanky, youthful figure of Joe Dacy at the head of the group trying to do a sort of mad Mullah terpsichorean feat and at the same time furnish the music. Evidently Joe had caught the prize fish, while Hallet's mature partner — a little, fat, comfortable man — carried fish and poles, and beamed on the young folks who were emerging from the long, vine-covered pergola like a flock of sea birds in white garb.

There was a gay waving of hands and hats as Hallet came in sight, and a general greeting, jovial or restrained, according to previous acquaintance. A young girl who was trying to untangle her line came running to him eagerly.

"Oh, I'm so sorry you did not get here in time to go out with us, Mr. Hallet!" she exclaimed in her high girlish treble. "Such a lovely day! I tried to fish over the side — did not make a single catch."

"Oh, I don't know," said Tony Allen, sauntering up and noting that her whirling line had caught in Joe Dacy's sleeve. "I should call it a weighty one — on a string!"

"Others," was the only word uttered by Joe as he turned his eyes, though not his head, towards Tony, and past him to Miss Mitford. There was a little gasp at his boldness, and then all laughed.

"The others are coming," said Nell, hastily. "Gillie is still here, the to-be immortal J. Waddell G., and Fannie Smith, whom you were to meet last year and did n't."

"Don't mention Smith, please," said Lulu in mock appeal. "Since we have been sharing sunshades with counts — and no accounts — on the other side, we prefer to forget the discordant memory of Smith. Smythe-Orville is so much more euphonious."

Mr. Dacy shook his finger at her and tried to look severe, but failed. She snuggled up to him and whispered some nonsense as Gilman appeared in attendance on a petite little woman, whose extremely blonde hair looked almost infantile, and whose flimsy draperies were as sharp a contrast to the simple yachting costumes as was the glaring color of her grass-green hosiery and sunshade, as compared with their plain white. She lifted a lorgnette and surveyed the group under the trees, and slipped a little silken powder pad over her nose as she noted the presence of a new man.

"Ah, Hallet, old boy, just too late for the fair!" called Gilman, cheerily. "We have had an ideal day. Let me present you to Mrs. Smythe-Orville. We had

all begun to think you were going to keep on the town treadmill the rest of the season."

"We can't all be care-free butterflies like you, Gilman, or bloated aristocrats with handsome yachts like Tony. All I can hope for is a look-in occasionally. Where is Mrs. Wayne? Did n't you meet her?"

"Monica here! My dearest Monica, where, which way did she go?" asked Lulu, eagerly, as she grasped Joe's arm with the evident intent of going in search.

"Lulu," protested the sweet, tired voice of Mrs. Smythe-Orville, "do subdue your ecstasies. One would think her a long lost sister."

"Oh, but Mama, I idolized her when I was a little girl; it is three years ago. I never have seen her since, and papa loved her dearly."

"Try and cultivate a little more repose even though papa did love her dearly," suggested the lady with a faint, ironic smile. "Mr. Dacy can't enjoy that position."

Lulu giggled and released her grip on Joe.

"Was I pinching you?" she asked, and then the two smiled and conferred apart in low tones, while the others moved to the seats on the lawn. Gilman alone stood near the pergola, writing in a little notebook, his eyes occasionally on the two young people.

"A chiel's amang you taking notes," quoted Hallet, confidentially, to Nell, who made a grimace of comic dread.

"And, faith, he'll prent it," she added. Anthony Allen regarded Gilman kindly, but shook his head.

"He will catch some other fad or fever before the notes are ever finished," he decided. "Gilly has a new hobby with every change of the moon!"

Tea was brought out to the rustic table on the terrace, and the group lounged in the shade and discoursed on the day's doings. Gilman carried tea to Mrs. Smythe-Orville and they sat slightly apart in conversation too interesting to permit the lady to note that Lulu and Joe were making a comically exaggerated retreat towards the shore. With fingers on lips and high, stealthy steps they afforded the others quiet amusement until the shrubbery hid them. Mrs. Smythe-Orville nibbled biscuit and sipped her tea with no idea of the little pantomime behind her back; in fact, the fondness Lulu was exhibiting for comradeship with a mere stripling, a stripling without an extra dollar, was growing to be a source of annoyance to her. When a girl gets started on an idle, profitless flirtation, it is always more or less of a problem for a chaperone, and Mrs. Smythe-Orville had announced that with Lulu she did not mean to allow any such useless pastime.

Of course, it was different with a woman who had cares of her own, and really needed certain relaxations; and to witness her rapt attention as Gilman read her some of his human interest notes, an outsider might have been led to think that Mrs. Smythe-Orville was actually flirting herself, or else in earnest.

"I do not usually read fiction, Mr. Gilman," she confessed in her languishing tones and exaggerated English intonation, "but I really shall look forward to reading your book, you know; an autographed copy, please. I should treasure it!"

"And if it turns out to be a play, Fannie, he will have to substitute an autographed order for a box. How long would you treasure that?"

"You must not mind the frivolous remarks of the light-minded group under that tree," said Gilman, warningly; "they are a non-inspirational lot. But you are different; you realize that when a man elects to do a really representative piece of work he should select the medium with great care. Suppose you have a story to tell [the non-inspirational group smiled. Nell even giggled, and Tony Allen slid limply under the table as if overcome by the prospect], you can tell it in a poem, or novel, or a play. Ever have your head examined?"

Mrs. Smythe-Orville sat up, forgetting for a moment her becoming, languorous pose, while Nell touched Tony with the tip of her white shoe and checked his whispered threat to scream.

"I mean by a phrenologist," continued Gilman, serenely oblivious to the joy occasioned by his latest hobby; "a really wonderful science. All his life a man may possess astonishing talents shut in under his skull, and never have a suspicion of them. Phrenology is the golden key to the casket; through it I discovered I had the equipment of a dramatist."

"How remarkable," breathed Mrs. Smythe-Orville.

"The only way," whispered Miss Mitford.

"When I learned that I went to work in a thoroughly scientific way. Notes? you should see my collection," said Gilman, growing enthusiastic in the presence of so sympathetic a listener. "I have them all classified already and only been at work a month. One for tragedy, others for comedy, romance, adventure, society, outdoor life—here is the latter," and he drew the little red notebook from his pocket and turned the pages for his fair audience. "You see, phenomena, sea notes, woodland notes. How could you better that?"

"You couldn't, Gillie," conceded Nell; "the only next best thing would be to buy a few encyclopedias."

"I realized," said Mrs. Smythe-Orville, "that you were planning something very important. And does your friend, the distinguished novelist, Mr. Sargent, work from such prettily classified material?"

"McLane Sargent? No, indeed," said Gilman, shaking his head. "Sargent has no method, no method at all; just strikes out on the trail, hit or miss."

"Usually hits," said Tony Allen, with a ponderous sigh as he scrambled up from the grass. "He makes center shots with no trouble in the world."

Nell laughed with the others at the statement and doleful tone. The application to herself was so frank that the amusement was general, and even Mrs. Dacy could take no offense. She had stated to Hallet that

Tony was behaving beautifully, and even his open avowal that he had no hope of falling in love again for at least a year, was made so frankly that he seemed a very safe comrade, if only Elinor would be good! But Elinor was not making any promises.

"Lulu is quite wild over that last book of his, or rather the pictures," observed Mrs. Smythe-Orville. "She declares that the woman in the pictures reminds her of your friend, Mrs. Wayne."

Elinor Mitford sat up suddenly, very straight, and whistled, a long, low, thoughtful whistle, as she stared at the others.

"Fannie, you are a green and white jewel," she decided. "My poor brain has been muddled just thinking of those lovely drawings; they did have such a familiar note, yet I never was able to locate the reason. Tony, do run in the house and get my copy of the book; that's a good child. George, did you notice any resemblance?"

"N-no," said Hallet, slowly, "I never thought of it, yet—"

"You see, as soon as it is mentioned you *do* think of it. And Lulu was the only one of us to sense the reason why they seemed so—not exactly familiar, but just—"

Words failed Miss Mitford as she spread out her hands at the futility of expression for the subtle something, fascinating, yet evanescent, in the drawings.

Tony appeared, walking majestically with the vol-

ume extended on open palms as a priest officiating at some ceremony, and, making a profound obeisance, offered it to Miss Mitford with a quaint grimace. It was the lauded work of his successful rival, and he appreciated the situation.

They laughed at his pantomime, but gathered eagerly around the book, turning the pages and scanning the illustrations.

There were fragments of the cliffs and purple-shadowed waters at their base, long stretches of yellow sand meeting the curling foam of the breakers, ranges where the yellow of the poppies reached from ocean to mountain, and every here and there a bit of the old mission — broken archway, shaded patio, festoons of the pepper trees, and wide-spreading palms — all these as settings for the woman who moved through the story, slender and dark, in shadowy mantilla. Whether kneeling at a shrine, or walking under the arches, or riding under the aliso trees of the cañon, all of the group were suddenly alive to the fact that the wonderful illustrations gave never a clear view of the face of the woman; it was either shadowed or drooping or turned aside. Yet so cleverly was it done that the spirit and feeling of the figure was never weakened, and the hands alone had remarkable character.

"Well, upon my word," gasped Elinor Mitford, "I never saw anything quite like it! Until we started to look for the face I never discovered that it isn't

there. Why, it is like a set of puzzle pictures, and Lane never even mentioned it! I wonder—I wonder if he passed them over as I did?"

"Well," remarked Mrs. Smythe-Orville, "this one picture of the girl in the mantilla on the cliff does resemble the figure of the girl alone in the sailboat whom we were watching through the glass, Mr. Gilman and I. He was enthusiastic over the way she handled it."

"Then Monica was your girl alone in the sailboat! There are not so many others who dare this coast alone. She is like a fish in the water."

"But how does it come that Mr. Sargent has that especial type of woman for his illustrations?"

"Are they even acquainted?" asked Tony Allen.

"No, indeed! I had not seen him for years until lately—never even mentioned him to Monica. But there is a delightful mystery about these drawings—no one knows who made them, not even Lane. My, I feel like a female Sherlock! whoever made these illustrations had studied Monica's figure and characteristic poses."

"There is a strong suggestion of her, even her hand," said Hallet. "Some clever fellow with a camera—"

"Oh, she knows artists by the dozen. One of them has certainly dreamed of her as she made those drawings. I do wonder if Monica knows of them. All that I know is that a woman sent them to the pub-

lishers and signed no name—only this little Chinese symbol—but she certainly can't be a Chink! I can scarcely wait to learn if Monica knows her."

"I shall feel quite overwhelmed by all the talent here," remarked Mrs. Smythe-Orville. "A picturesque artist, and two novelists." Her glance rested on Gilman as one of them, and he smiled blandly. He had actually talked both novel and play until he felt they were at least partly written.

"Will any art on this side of the water help you forget the charms of the Mediterranean, or your latest victim, the Count of Castlemar?"

"Oh, that is a life apart!" she breathed, rapturously.

"The Count of Castlemar?" said Hallet; "do you refer to the American named Harris, who has lately purchased an estate called Castlemar on the Italian coast?"

"He may be American born, but I fancied him English; he is so delightfully fascinating."

Hamilton Dacy, who had been lounging in an easy chair half dozing, opened his eyes and regarded Hallet, whose tone was carefully careless.

"A man about forty-eight, dark eyes, black mustache, and imperial?"

"Oh, you know him?"

"I know something of the—fame of his entertainments," returned Hallet. "A fine place, judging from newspaper items."

"Magnificent!" breathed Mrs. Smythe-Orville, ecstatically. "Marble terraces overhanging the sea, a pavilion under glass where he gave moonlight dances, a perfect fairy land—*there* is a land of real romance for your notebook, Mr. Gilman!"

Gilman listened with interest to her glowing picture as they sauntered along the terrace in the wake of the others, while Hallet smiled ironically at Mr. Dacy.

"A fine background for a man whose wife is glad of every extra order for work," he observed. "I suppose you caught on, Dacy?"

"Hardly. Count of Castlemar? What new freak is that?"

Hallet took a letter from his pocket. "Just received from Italy," he observed. "I took the first train up. Mrs. Wayne is here. I want to talk to you before seeing her, and I should go back in the morning."

Hamilton Dacy read the letter with an accompaniment of shrugs and grunts of impatience. His wife halted on the terrace and, observing that the two men had lingered behind purposely, guessed the reason.

"Hamilton!" she called. "I suppose you had better send someone to look for Monica."

"I will let him go in a minute, Mrs. Dacy—a little business—"

"But I utterly disapprove of the 'business.' 'Until death do ye part,' says the marriage service."

"Mrs. Dacy, when a husband crosses half the world with another—lady friend—and leaves his wife behind, we have to realize that life has many deaths to consider besides the final one."

"Of course, I can't defend Glyndon's conduct," she conceded, "but there has never been a divorce in the family, and I can't see that one is needed now. It would make a horrid scandal."

Her husband finished reading the letter, and paced down to the pergola and back, his hands clasped besides him, and a frown on his round, good-natured face. His wife, receiving no reply from him, turned back to the house. Having asserted herself, she could afford to wait for an opportunity to discuss the matter alone with him.

"*Gad!* he's a case," said Mr. Dacy, finally. "Tired of that fool woman, and I suppose he wants a new one, who insists on marriage as a sop to Society!"

"See, here, Dacy," said Hallet, guardedly, as the two paced side by side across the lawn. "Mrs. Wayne gave you her little money to take care of, or invest. Can't you make a lucky strike with that deposit, clear a couple of thousand for her? Not enough to make her suspicious, but enough to cover divorce costs if she could bring herself to consider it. The cost might be a drawback, and she is so independent."

"Cost, nonsense," growled his partner. "Why should she consider cost? Doesn't he offer to pay all bills, and make her a fine allowance besides?"

"You know she has n't touched his money, and that she won't touch it."

"But this lucky strike business? The two thousand—"

"I 'll furnish that," said Hallet, quietly, "but—it 's between you and me, Dacy."

Hamilton Dacy sat down suddenly on a rustic seat and stared at his partner in amazement that was half reproof.

"Dangerous ground, George, dangerous ground."

Hallet felt the color flaming in his face as Dacy stared, and frowned, and tapped the arm of the chair nervously. He had never in all their experience had call to check George Hallet for an unwise, irrational impulse—George, who was steady as the town clock, but this—

"Oh, damn the conventions!" exclaimed Hallet in answer, not so much to Dacy's words as his expression. "Why should a man not help a woman friend, when he is allowed, and expected, to turn his pockets inside out for a man friend? She won't borrow from his relatives; she has but little capital of her own. I 'd give a lot more than the money to see her free entirely. She is only a girl after all; why can't we help her to a girl's freedom?"

"And what about you?" asked Mr. Dacy, bluntly.

"I wouldn't dare offer her the money," acknowledged Hallet, "and I don't know that she would ever

look at me, but if she were free — well, I could take my chance with the others!"

"If she has good sense you will win, George, but a woman is too uncertain to bet on — even Monica. You've won this court though. I'll back you up; but what did that 'count' business mean? I didn't grasp it."

"Did I only show you one letter?" asked Hallet, searching his other pockets and halting as he saw a woman coming up the cliff, appearing and disappearing again in the shrubbery. "Never mind about the other letter now — she is coming. You speak to her at once concerning the money you made for her in stocks — I'll go and meet her."

"But see here, Hallet! Confound it. Tell me what stock?"

But Hallet, in passing between two great clumps of laurel, made a rustle of branches, drowning the last word, and Hamilton Dacy was left sputtering and uncertain, while his younger partner reached the edge of the lawn just as a girl in gray emerged from the shrubbery. Gowned and shod in gray, she had the touch of white in the loose tie under the sailor collar, and the white lace mantilla falling from her shoulders. Some unruly branches had caught in her hair, and in loosening a twig her face was averted and half turned aside, so that she did not see Hallet until he was quite close.

She uttered a little cry of pleasure and both hands went out to him quickly.

"Of course, you would come through the jungle instead of the graded path," he observed as he picked some leaves from her hair, and Hamilton Dacy, watching them, suddenly decided that George might have a chance if affairs worked out right—and what a good, sensible thing it would be. Strange it had never occurred to him before.

"Everything is commonplace on the graded path," said the girl in gray, looking up at him with a grimace tinged by a smile, and then she went forward to the older man and shook hands heartily.

"Uncle Dacy, you all ran away from me," she complained. "I was out on the water alone but could not find you."

"My dear child, you gave us no hope that we might expect you," said Mr. Dacy, leading her to a seat with a certain affectionate regard. "You know none of us would be surprised to hear from you in Peru. We never do know when you will dawn upon us or when you will fade away. Well, well, hard work seems to agree with you, and Hallet here tells me you are going in for this sort of thing seriously," and he touched a small sketch book she carried.

"I should say so," she returned gaily. "Maum Rosa and I have been working ourselves to frazzles on my new studio. My first real workshop in the city!

I am delighted with it, and shall do some portraits next winter in addition to my other work. All good friends, please remember me."

"I certainly shall," said Hallet. "I give you a commission now to paint Dacy, but I believe he has some good news for you, and I hope I have some more."

Monica Wayne looked from one to the other quizzically.

"Two lawyers, each with separate and individual good news for me!" she said, looking straight ahead as if weighing the statement. Then she turned confidentially to Dacy and asked in a pretense of a whisper, "Who's dead?"

"Monica!"

"My only guess," she retorted, smiling at his attempted austerity. "You had better tell me."

"Suppose," he said, impressively, "I had made two thousand for you in a lucky investment."

"With my money?" she asked, eyeing him as he nodded complacently. "*You!* Why, I went with you to order things last summer at the village store, and —you—didn't know cabbages from cauliflower."

"Cabbages are not quite in the same class with stocks," he returned.

"But—I thought you invested my little money in government bonds—do they take jumps like that?" she persisted.

Hamilton Dacy looked towards Hallet for help, but Hallet was looking seaward.

"Why — you see — I thought it was a good thing," he stated, a bit lamely, "and when I saw a good chance in mining stocks —"

"Mining stocks, what in?" asked Monica Wayne, "and when?"

"Ah, Monday, the 23rd — no, 24th in — in —" and he moved a step towards Hallet as Monica lifted her hat from the ground where it had fallen. "George, what in?"

"Anaconda," said Hallet without turning his head. But, quietly though it was spoken, Monica Wayne heard it and grew a trifle more alert, as one who was accustomed to hold herself on guard.

"Yes, Anawanda," stated Dacy, easily, as if disposing of the question, "and now," he added, briskly, "you must come in and meet the others; they are all waiting for you."

"How do you spell it?" asked the girl, ignoring entirely the social joys within reach, and Mr. Dacy with a final attempt at bluff spelled "A-n-a-w-a-n-d-a," at which Hallet groaned and Monica Wayne laughed.

"Romancing is hard work, isn't it?" she asked. "Don't you try it again in warm weather. You dear old goose! there is an Anawanda stock on the market — bogus stock. I left a friend prostrated in New York because she had invested in it. Now Uncle Dacy, 'fess up! Why are you trying this sort of thing with me?"

Hamilton Dacy faced her, pompous and incredulous

as she began, limp and exasperated as she questioned him. What business had a pretty girl to be better posted on mining stocks than the man who was virtually the head of the family? He had always understood that the artistic temperament was lacking in practical equipment. Why, even his practical wife would have been so delighted to have the extra money that she would not have cared an iota what stock it came from; but Monica—well, Monica was, to put it mildly, difficult.

"Why, why, Monica," he began, courageously.

"Now the undraped truth, Uncle Dacy!"

"Well, you see, well, we thought, Hallet and I—"

"Hallet can tell his own news," said his partner, coming forward, as Mr. Dacy floundered and failed under Monica's ironical smile. "I think Mrs. Dacy spoke of tea, and—"

"So she did," agreed the mendacious Dacy, plainly relieved at the suggestion. "George can tell you all about it, Monica. You—you can depend on George." With which quite unnecessary advice he beat a retreat to the house, grumbling condemnation on the Anacondawanda stocks.

Monica Wayne looked after him, amused and puzzled, and then turned to Hallet, who stood silently regarding her.

"How generous of him," she said, with a tender note of affection in her mellow voice. "But why should he do that, or try to do it?"

"Perhaps to help you arrange this," he said, sitting beside her and offering her the letter Dacy had read. She put forth her hand, but drew it back as she saw the writing, and the warm notes were gone from her voice, the smile from her deep eyes.

"I don't think I care to read that," she remarked, indifferently. "I can trust you to tell me all I need to know."

"Mr. Wayne wants a divorce."

She leaned back and looked at him with a little grimace, showing the white teeth.

"Get it for him, Mr. Lawyer," she advised.

"We can't; no one can. The matter rests with you," he stated, briefly. "He offers you a most substantial settlement if you will secure a divorce allowing him to marry again."

"I might consider it if he married the woman he went away with," she observed, "the woman he should have married when he married me."

George Hallet regarded her with a sort of wonder in his eyes, but shook his head.

"He could not have married her then; she was not free. It is not likely he will marry her now. She was very reckless, more reckless than you know. Her story is unfortunately too well known, and society—"

"But society would receive him with open arms if he abandons her!" interrupted Monica Wayne, impatiently. "Dear society! George Hallet, I came up here for a holiday, and you greet me with that!"

She waved a shapely, accusing hand towards the letter she disdained to read. But Hallet caught the hand and checked her evident intent to follow Dacy to the house.

"Listen," he said, quietly. "I know they all, Mrs. Dacy especially, advise you against divorce, but they are thinking of the family, while I am thinking of you. By the law you are still his wife."

"I shall be my own law."

"Wait," he said, persuasively, and took an envelope from his pocket containing some newspaper clippings, which he unfolded. "These are gleaned from foreign correspondents and all refer in various tones to the startling notoriety gained lately by a man called by courtesy the Lord of Castlemar. His excesses furnished gossip of no small importance in Italy last winter."

"Well, what of that?" she asked, with a little puzzled frown.

"Glyndon H. Wayne of New York became Harris Glyndon of Paris—with Mrs. Harris Glyndon, of course."

Mrs. Wayne was regarding a scratch on her pretty gray shoe, and a snagged place on the gray silk stocking—already a broken thread had started a tiny ladder on the instep.

"Your news is three years old, Mr. Lawyer," she observed.

George Hallet looked at her grimly, and then leaned forward, tapping the paper impressively.

"This is not; he has left Paris, and lately, Mrs. Glyndon. He has bought an estate in Italy called Castlemar, and the title is assumed with the property, or bestowed upon him by his group of sycophants! The new friends of Harris know little of Mr. Glyndon, and nothing at all of Mr. Wayne, but some day there will be an explosion over there, and some lurid scandals, also our home papers will have full-page pictures of all the principals. Don't risk having your name dragged through the mire he has made. He wants a divorce; let him have it and get your own freedom."

He was so earnest in his appeal that she did not smile any more; neither did she look at him. His personal interest crept into his tones and she glanced towards the terrace, hoping for some interruption, but no wished-for intruder was in sight.

"Do the Dacys know this?" she asked at last.

"Only that he wants the divorce. Mrs. Wayne, some day you also may want it. You are young to think of all your life alone, and—I—"

Monica Wayne halted him with lifted hands of protest as she rose.

"Don't spoil my holiday by suggesting marriage as an inevitable bugaboo of the future," she said, mockingly. "No, thank you. Matrimony as an institution has no charm for me."

"Oh," and Hallet's expression was rueful as he followed her to the veranda, "if you regard it merely as an institution!"

"My only point of view," she said, lightly, and then with a tardy appreciation of his helpfulness she stopped at the veranda steps and added, "But I do realize that you mean it all for my own good, and I promise to think of your proposal."

In their earnestness neither of them had noticed the group inside the open French window until Elinor Mitford laughed, and then emerged to greet Mrs. Wayne with an avalanche of kisses and rapturous expressions of joy.

"A proposal your very first day at the shore! Monica Wayne, I am surprised, and"—she added, turning to the others—"she promised to think about it!"

Mrs. Dacy looked sharply at Hallet, but he only smiled at her, while Tony Allen made his nicest bow and lifted Mrs. Wayne's hand to his lips. Tony was always on his best behavior with her.

"Madame Monica, moon and tide have been waiting until you arrived," he stated. "We can now consider our summer as here."

"How nice to find you and Nanny in the harbor ahead of me," she said, greeting them in frank comradeship. "Did not some one mention tea?"

"Just around the corner," stated Tony, and drew her hand through his arm.

"Oh, wait one little, little moment," begged Elinor. "Tony, where is that book? Monica, do stand just as you are and let me drape this lace scarf over your head — there, if that window was only an arch instead of a square, and those trees outside were only palms instead of elms —"

"What on earth are you talking about, Nell?" demanded the improvised model, "and what have you there, Tony?"

"McLane Sargent's new book, 'The Woman of the Twilight.'"

"And we have all decided that the artist who made those illustrations has studied you, Monica Wayne!" announced Nell in triumph. "It is exactly your type. Here is the picture of the woman in the arch, a certain pose, a certain style — it is almost identical."

"Nonsense!" said Monica, tossing the scarf from her head to her shoulders. "You have the most remarkable imagination, Nell."

"Imagination nothing," returned Nell in glee. "They all can see it. It will be a joy to show Lane."

"Lane!" repeated Monica, looking at her in a puzzled way. "You mean McLane Sargent, the writer? You — know him?"

"Slightly," acknowledged Nell, to the amusement of the others. "He is a great pet of Auntie's. Now tell us, Monica, do you know who made those illustrations?"

Monica Wayne sank into a seat, while Nell turned

the leaves rapidly, showing her one drawing after another without receiving a word of comment: "Do you, Monica?"

"What is the name?" asked Mrs. Wayne. "None of these are signed."

"Oh!" sighed Nell, hopelessly. "If we knew the name we would know all about it. Did you ever pose for a friend like this, or this?"

"Never," stated Monica Wayne, decidedly. "It is a real test of devotion to pose for a brother or sister artist, and I am not a devoted creature. Any little similarity you think you have discovered is a mere coincidence."

"*Think* I have discovered. Why, Tony—"

"Tony always finds living is more comfortable if he agrees with you," said Mrs. Wayne, serenely. "So you two children can look at pictures while Mr. Hallet and I have tea."

"Now, see what you spoiled for me," said Tony, looking dolefully after Mrs. Wayne and Hallet. "If it had not been for your dinky little picture book it might have been my proud task to select the lump of sugar for her tea. I never loved a dear gazelle but what it fell with the buttered side down!"

"Tony, you get crazier every minute," was Miss Mitford's retort to his wail. "But I will find you a nice little sugar plum instead of the gazelle. You never did get me those water lilies you promised."

"Now is the accepted time," announced Tony,

valiantly, and the two ran down the steps just as Mrs. Dacy caught sight of them through the window.

"Elinor, where are you going?" she asked, and the two halted, and Tony drew a doleful face of comic despair.

"No sugar plums for me," he sighed.

"Tony was going down to the pond to get me lilies," said Elinor, bravely; but Mrs. Dacy shook her head.

"Tony can escort you instead to meet the next train," she suggested. "Mr. Sargent will be on it."

"So, you sent for him?" asked Miss Mitford, looking very levelly at her aunt, but the tone of Mrs. Dacy was mildly corrective.

"I invited him, and he has telegraphed acceptance."

"Well," hesitated her niece, "he did not telegraph me, so how was I to know? And I promised Tony—"

"Mrs. Dacy is quite right," said Tony, with a most virtuous air. "The lilies can make up their minds to wait. Someone should meet Mr. Sargent; naturally it would add to the joy of that conquering hero if you should be the someone."

The young lady looked at him in amazement.

"Well," she grumbled, irritably, "between the two of you—"

"Thank you, Tony," and Mrs. Dacy beamed on her unexpected assistant. "Elinor does not seem to realize that to be the—well, one may say the help and inspiration of a man like McLane Sargent is a gift of Providence not to be trifled with."

Mrs. Wayne stepped out on the veranda, smiling down on Elinor and Anthony. The precise tones of Mrs. Dacy indicated that the girl was the recipient of a lecture, though the cause had not reached her ears. But at sight of her Elinor Mitford laughed skeptically, thankful for any excuse for retort. When her Aunt Martha dragged in Providence as the clincher to an argument, her niece usually evoked the diabolical, and the sight of Monica Wayne reminded her of the much-discussed pictures.

"Inspiration," she repeated, mockingly. "Do you know the real inspiration of Lane Sargent? It's the unknown woman who made the drawings for that book!"

"Elinor!"

"How do you know it is a woman," asked Tony, banteringly, "since they are not signed?"

"How do I know?" interrupted Elinor. "I know because he told me. You remember the story was published as a novelette in a magazine without illustrations. It made a big hit, and an unknown artist sent in a dozen drawings, giving a fictitious name, and stating that for family reasons she could not be known as the illustrator. Well, you can imagine how both Lane and the publisher jumped at the chance of those clever drawings. He exchanged letters with her, all about art, of course, according to his story. I fancy *his* grew rather warm. At any rate, the woman put an end to the correspondence by telling him she was a

married woman. I never saw a man more broken up. If it is possible for a man to be in love with the mind of a woman he never saw then Lane Sargent was in love with that woman. He was in a blind, swearing rage at being tricked by her like that. Oh, he is willing to accept ordinary folk for every-day company, but she is his real inspiration!"

"Elinor!" and Mrs. Dacy was plainly shocked as the words came tumbling over each other to prove that their celebrity was but common clay after all. As she turned away she added, "I trust you do not express those exaggerated ideas to anyone else. Tony, don't take her seriously."

"No, Tony, don't," and Miss Mitford shrugged her shoulders at both of them and started at a swinging gait to the stables, with Tony doing an imitation trot at her heels.

Monica Wayne looked after them with a wistful fondness in her eyes. How wonderful to remain as young, as impulsive, and care-free as those two had always been. That was the beauty of having had a real childhood, and thus grow by degrees into the atmosphere of the later years. And by contrast how harsh, how tragic was her own girlhood, thrust forward into the maëlstrom of volcanic emotions at an age when happier children are reading and dreaming of fairy tales, and the waiting maid to whom the prince comes.

A quick sigh touched her lips, and she lifted the little

book from the chair and turned the pages, smiling faintly at the things she had heard; and Hallet, who had been watching the picture she made against the pink glow of the evening sky, came forward.

"Sargent's novel?" he remarked, glancing down at it in her hand. "You must read it. Your memories of the Mexican country should make it of interest to you; but I presume those childhood recollections have grown a bit dim after the glories of old Spain."

She looked at him, and past him, and for a brief moment saw again that childhood of which she would never speak. She shivered and drew the lace scarf about her.

"No, they have not grown dim," she said, simply.

He looked at her, and realized that in some unknown way he had caused her to put up the wall of reserve, which all of them were made conscious of at times.

"You don't seem ever really to need humanity," he said, gently. "Yet there are times when you make me feel I would like to be the one to help you. You scoff at marriage now, but some day some man, the right man, will make you think of it. Then you will want no barrier of the law between you; you will want to be free."

"Who is freer than I? The only bonds about me are a protection. They make me *taboo* to the flirtations other girls are doomed to, and—secure me liberty to work."

He smiled at her, but shook his head.

"Suppose a day should come when work does not seem the only thing in the world? You will want to be free to give your hand where the heart leads. That sounds extremely sentimental from a lawyer to a client, but — think of it."

She rose to her feet and nodded her head without looking at him.

"Yes, I will," she murmured. "I 'll — think of it."

She walked slowly across the terrace to the pergola, and much as he would have liked to walk beside her, he felt barred out and stood watching her and watching some birds wheeling above her, little fluttering gleams against the sky. As she disappeared in the screen of the vines he turned away and noted the figure of the girl Hettie as she fairly ran up the path and towards the side entrance. In a way she reminded him of the low-flying birds darting here and there towards shelter for the dark to come.

But the birds had glad little calls and many coquettings, while the girl's face was pale, and her eyes held nothing of gladness.

"You look tired, little girl," he said, kindly, and she halted and looked up at him with the quick color flushing her face.

"It is a steep climb from the Cove, Mr. Hallet," she answered with a little nervous fluttering in the throat, "and I hurried so, yet it is late — and —"

Hallet made a gesture of detention, and she watched

him, wondering, as he stepped down from the veranda and walked beside her.

"Hettie, I—I hear that your grandfather has no steady employment beyond the trifling work for Mrs. Wayne, and I might speak for him to some boat-club friends, if you think—"

The girl shook her head.

"I would n't dare ask you, Mr. Hallet—it would only make trouble for you. He—he can't keep any place steady along the shore. I am ashamed to tell you—but—"

She turned her head away to hide the tears in her eyes, and Hallet found himself patting her on the shoulder with never a suspicion that a housemaid with jealous eyes was staring at them from the window of the dining room.

"There, there, Hettie, don't cry about it. You have a serious talk with him and let me know results. Perhaps among strangers he might do better. Here is one of my business cards. You write to me for him; we will see what we can do. Come now, cheer up!"

The girl looked at him so gratefully that it was embarrasing, and while she did put out her hand, she uttered no actual word of thanks, but he understood, and patted her hand reassuringly.

"That 's a good girl, don't cry, cheer up," he added, and then, followed by her almost adoring gaze, took himself around to the front of the house as quickly as might be. Heavens! why should a young thing like

that, with eyes like a hurt fawn, have to carry the woes of the dissipations of age?

In his haste to evade her thanks, he had not noted that in taking out a pocketbook for his card he had dropped a handkerchief on the grass at the feet of the girl. She stooped and lifted it as if it had been a flower, and, holding it a moment in both hands, thrust it hurriedly, secretly, into her blouse, and turned to enter the house as Mrs. Dacy, austere and indignant, stood at the closed door.

"Your money will be sent you tomorrow," she said, coldly. "I have no further use for your services."

"Oh, Mrs. Dacy, I tried, but I could not return earlier—I had to find him—I—"

"And you may give me that card," continued the shocked lady. "I cannot employ girls who waylay gentlemen on our estate. The parlor maid tells me it has occurred before. I am surprised at Mr. Hallet."

"Oh, Mrs. Dacy, call him back, ask him!"

"Ask him why he makes appointments with you—and why his handkerchief is treasured in that manner?"

The girl only stared at her, wordless, but her hand crept to the fold of the blouse where the handkerchief lay. She could see the smiling housemaid looking down on them from the window and recalled some petty jealousy she had forgotten—yet it had led to this!

"I have seen enough," said Mrs. Dacy as she turned away, with an air of finality. "I gave your mother's daughter a chance when no one else would, and the

result has been what every one expected. I trust this will be a lesson to you."

Then the door opened and closed, and the girl was alone. She stood vaguely staring at the closed door, as if striving to gather courage to approach, to explain; but the sound of the girlish, care-free laughter came to her from the path through the shrubbery, the voice of Lulu, and with a gesture of despair she turned backwards on the trail to the Cove.

Lulu's voice, high and clear, came to her, and she was speaking to McLane Sargent.

"I should have known you anywhere by your pictures in the paper," she announced. "Wasn't it nice that your friends in the yacht brought you into the very cove where we went to look for Mrs. Wayne?"

"Rather," he agreed, "the yacht could not get up quite the speed of a train, but it brought recompense," and he smiled down in her eager face. "I did not hope to find a water nymph at the shore to welcome me."

"We would all have been down if we had known," declared Lulu, "wouldn't we, Joe? Everyone is daffy over your new book, and the girl in the pictures looks like Monica, so, of course, I love them."

"Monica; you mean Nell's cousin?" he asked, and then through the pergola he caught sight of a slender figure coming towards them. "There comes Nell now."

"Let's hide," suggested Lulu, clutching Sargent's

arm and waving Joe to the rear. To please her Sargent halted and enjoyed the dimples of anticipation as she bent forward peering through the shrubbery, to pounce on Nell as she came abreast. But Sargent from his superior height could see over the mass of pink laurel, and at first glimpse of a lace-draped head he made a slight movement forward, then stood astounded, staring. He could not see the face, as it was half turned away and uplifted, watching the circling birds, and walking slowly across the green, nearer and nearer, to the hidden three.

"It is not Nell!" and Sargent's voice was almost a whisper through doubt and wonder. "It's my picture 'Woman of the Twilight'!"

"It's Monica," cried Lulu, rushing forward, ecstatically. "Oh, my dear, dearest Monica!"

"My little Lulu—not so little now!" and Mrs. Wayne held her off to note the growth of the years, and then kissed her as Sargent and Joe came forward—Sargent with at least half his soul in his eyes and a strange sense of having heard that voice, and even looked in her eyes before.

She glanced up, and Lulu's chatter was unheeded as she sank into the garden seat, and the book she carried slid from her fingers and rested on the grass.

"This is Mr. Sargent, and here is Joe," stated Lulu, pulling the latter forward. "We've all been daft over his new book—I don't mean Joe's book."

"I fear I must have appeared daft at sight of you,

Madam — Mrs. Wayne," Sargent remarked. "That lace mantilla made you look to me as if the woman of those illustrations had walked out of the pages of the book to meet us in Mr. Dacy's garden."

"Nell imagined there was a resemblance, due I fancy to the mantilla," and she drew the scarf from her head and folded it carefully. That little bit of practical work gave him time to scan both face and figure.

"She did not confide her imaginings to me," he observed, "and it is more than the mantilla. May I ask if you have any artist friend — a woman who possibly made the drawings for the book?"

"Here it is," said Lulu, eagerly, as Joe picked it from the grass, and they all watched with interest as she turned a few of the leaves and shook her head.

"Certainly no friend of mine or she would have signed her creations and avoided trouble for me. I've had to account for the shape of my head or shoulders twice within an hour. For really, you see these drawings are merely landscapes with the human note only suggested; there is no real portrait of a woman there to compare anyone with."

"Yet there is an intangible something akin to you in them. It gave me an uncanny shock to meet you. Your very voice sounds as I knew it would when I saw you, yet — we never have met — have we?"

"Probably not, or your impressions would not be so vague," she remarked, ironically. "It all sounds very nice and exciting, but —"

She smiled politely, yet gave him the impression that she was easily bored, and that his expressed thoughts might seem a trifle fantastic to her.

"The desire to know is not an empty curiosity with me. It is — but I must not bore you with my reasons. I understand that you are an artist, and —"

"A different line of work, entirely different," she said, amiably. "I prefer working out my own ideas to illustrating text."

"Still, you will appreciate the beauty of these and understand my interest in the maker of them."

She graciously gave her attention to the drawings, with an obvious desire to please.

"This picture material is very good," she agreed. "So many stories suggest no pictures and make hard work for the illustrator; but this material is unusually rich, and the drawings are pretty."

"Pretty!" repeated McLane Sargent, with more than a little of surprise as he looked at her. Others had raved over them, and in the cabin of the yacht he had just arrived in he had found several of them mounted and pinned to the wall by one ardent admirer. He was struck sharply by the contrast, and wondered if Mrs. Wayne could possibly be of the narrow gauge workers who were restricted to their own themes and mediums.

"To me they are much more than merely pretty," he continued, loyally. "They have done more to make the book popular than the little story."

"Oh, everyone likes the story," said Lulu, "though I am not allowed to read it. Mama has to read it first."

Her ingenuousness made them laugh and cleared the air, rather heavily charged by the dogged persistence of Sargent.

"Well, *I* like the drawings; some of them are little gems," and he turned the pages eagerly. "Would you call that ruined dome with the poppies flaming against the deep sky merely pretty?" he asked, "or the moon rising back of the black cliff where the one lone figure stands at the edge above the sea? or the deep purple of the range where the solitary rider is the one far human note? and the skies—the wonderful tragic skies! Can you find these merely 'pretty'?"

"I find them magnificent, if it please you," she said, half laughing. "I certainly find you generous to your artist, and that is refreshing, you know! The troubles of some of my art friends are many when they fail to see things as the writer sees them."

"That is why these seem so wonderful to me," continued Sargent, looking at the little book. "The artist revealed to me much that was vague in my own mind. She took the plain prose I wrote and lifted it into a harmony by the big suggestion of the illustrations. The atmosphere is perfect, more perfect than any I put into the text; it is and will always be—a marvel to me."

George Hallet and Hamilton Dacy, pacing the veranda, talking and smoking, turned the corner, and

seeing the new arrival, met Sargent, and in the greetings, and in the chatter of Lulu over their luck in seeing him first, Monica Wayne remained seated, glancing idly over the book and occasionally noted the pretty picture they all made as Nanny Allen, and Gilman, and Mrs. Smythe-Orville joined them; and Hallet detached himself from the group and came to her garden seat, where he stood with folded arms looking down on her judicially and quizzically. She smiled back at him with a certain comradeship and confidence.

"May I hope that you have been thinking?" he asked.

She nodded her head, still smiling, and Sargent, watching them, lost track of the discourse of Mrs. Smythe-Orville for a moment, and realized that Hallet was very much in earnest as he leaned forward eagerly for the next question.

"Is it 'yes'—or 'no'?"

"I shall not touch his money," said Monica Wayne, softly, "but I have almost decided it will be—'yes'!"

"Monica!" and Hallet's hand closed over hers for a moment—"I should say Mrs. Wayne—I am delighted. That is fine."

Then Mrs. Smythe-Orville joined them, and Gilman was interested in the account of the yacht trip by which Sargent had come into the cove after making the circle of Squaw River.

"It's a risky trip except when the tide is just right," he stated, warningly. "One has to have the right pilot

for that sort of pleasuring. I've got a dozen good nautical notes, peculiar ones, from just one circle of the island. Did you miss Nell?"

"I always miss Nell," returned Sargent, lightly, glancing about.

"She went to meet you with the machine—also Tony."

"Tony?" and Sargent's brows went up in quiet amusement. Hamilton Dacy nodded glumly. He was held to blame for Tony's presence, and had his own troubles.

Sargent turned directly to Tony's quiet little sister, and singled her out for special attention as they crossed the terrace to greet Mrs. Dacy.

"So that is our new celebrity," cooed Mrs. Smythe-Orville, scanning his tall figure through a lorgnette. "Mrs. Wayne, are you duly impressed by your new cousin? His last book has made quite a furore for such a little thing. It really has less than two hundred pages."

Monica Wayne stared at her wonderingly. "Cousin?" she repeated, with a perplexed frown.

"Oh, am I wrong? I understood you were Nell's cousin by marriage." Mrs. Wayne nodded assent to this, but said nothing. "Then," continued Mrs. Smythe-Orville, "when she marries Mr. Sargent, he also will be a cousin by marriage."

"*Nell!*" and there was no mistaking the sharp

surprise in her tone. "You mean that Nell Mitford is to marry McLane Sargent?"

"Haven't you heard?" asked Hallet. "But of course not, it is so recent, and no one knew where to write you."

"But—I thought—I was certain that Tony—"

"Oh, they quarreled, for the ninety-ninth time, and quit the engagement. That is an old story now—and you didn't know?"

Monica Wayne laughed, and drew the lace scarf about her shoulders and arose.

"Oh, these people!" she said, in smiling irony, "they are so constantly in love—and constant to no one."

As she crossed the veranda steps a cry from Lulu halted her, and she saw the girl run to the window and lift something tiny from the grass.

"Lulu!" expostulated Mrs. Smythe-Orville, "you are so excitable."

"Oh, oh!" cried the girl, in real distress, "it is a dear little bird. I saw it fly straight against the window and fall dead!"

"The windows beyond made it fancy all was open garden," volunteered Gilman.

"Yes," agreed Nanny, "it could not see the glass."

"But the glass killed it!" sobbed Lulu, heart-broken over the little tragedy.

"No, dear, it is only stunned," said Mrs. Wayne,

reassuringly, as she comforted the girl, and noted the fluttering of the little stray, "and I fear its wing is broken."

"Oh," breathed Lulu, hopefully, "what can we do for it?"

"You can let it go," stated Mrs. Smythe-Orville, impatiently.

"It would certainly die if let go now," said Mrs. Wayne, holding the little fluttering stranger against her breast, "but we may find a cage somewhere about the place, and you could try keeping it until the wing is well."

Lulu beamed hopefully at the plan, but Mrs. Smythe-Orville shrugged her shoulders doubtfully.

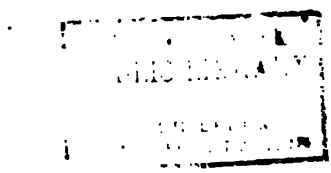
"It never can fly so well again!" she remarked, with an air of finality, but Monica Wayne smiled a trifle wistfully, as she felt Lulu's hand squeezing her arm in joy at finding a practical champion for her little cripple.

"It never can fly so high again," she conceded, "but it may gain a new note for its song, and—it may teach its sister birds to avoid treacherous transparent walls."

"I wonder," said Sargent, doubtfully, "if its enlarged experience will ever make amends for its crippled wing?"

Monica Wayne regarded him silently for a moment, and again her direct gaze gave him a queer little shock of familiarity, as if in some life of far away he had

The broken wing



known her very well. He could not flatter himself that she had any such impression of him. Her direct, unsmiling gaze was not gracious; it had a questioning, measuring quality, and left him tingling under a new sensation.

Gilman was busy making notes in one of his several pretty little books, and the others were so amused at him that they did not even see that long look between those two ere she turned away, leaving him with the feeling that he had been weighed and found wanting.

Elinor and Tony whirled up in the machine just then, and he drew a deep breath as he went to greet his fiancée, and felt grateful for her frank, outspoken comradeship. He told himself it was a good, healthy atmosphere for a man to live in. There was nothing about Nell uncannily suggestive of unseen bonds or former knowledge — or former lives — which was it? And Nell's voice gave one no strange, deep thrills as of music heard through some long forgotten instrument.

He wondered why no one had told him all these unexpected things about Mrs. Wayne. He had heard of her, of course. The family had all expressed their ideas of her and her work and her attitude under various influences, yet he told himself that none of them had ever given him an idea of the real woman. It was puzzling. His host and party were all of the usual type, possible to duplicate in seventy-five out of

every hundred cottages along the shore. It was merely a matter of income as to the lives they lived.

But where could one duplicate Monica Wayne, who walked through the laurel thicket from the Nowhere, and looked out of familiar eyes, faintly smiling, like a dream come true?

Dreams should stay in the land of dreams and not step out of the mists to keep pace with mortals!

He told himself this as he thanked the gods for the normal flesh and blood certainty of Nell, who was too frank and outspoken ever to pique curiosity or suggest mystery.

He even wondered that the matter-of-fact family accepted so gladly this outside member, who, by their own showing, was not at all frank as to her life or movements. Apparently she led a man's life instead of a woman's; she was cordial if it pleased her, but she very evidently needed none of her husband's family, was dependent upon none, and accountable to none; for which reason, as he could perceive, they were all more or less at her feet. Nell so openly adored her that he could see ahead the endless days when he would be expected to admire her; and he resented already the fact that she was probably too self-centered to praise, as others did, the real art value of those drawings in the little book.

Through the dinner he had opportunity to observe her at the other end of the table, where she bantered Gilman concerning his notes made along the poverty-

stricken Atlantic coast—the last possible place in the world to find romance.

"The land is too cold, too sterile here, to feed an imagination," she declared. "You come over some of my trails to Mexico. Do your romance of some old cathedral town among the palms, where the serenade is still the custom. Can you fancy songs of serenade either here or in Manhattan at any stage of its evolution? The thing is beyond imagination."

"I have my own doubts as to romance even in Mexico," declared Hamilton Dacy, "else how did you escape?"

"That's true, Monica," agreed Nell. "We won't allow you to slander our land of the fragrant cod without protest. If there was a spark of romance down there, some strenuous bandit would have kidnapped you, and you would be hearing your serenades behind barred windows."

"You trust me, and come to Mexico," said Mrs. Wayne, addressing Gilman. "You will find joy of life, and tragedy of life, side by side where the trail of the Anglo-Saxon has not spoiled it. There are still some corners where the old pagan life exists. Some day I am going back to it!"

"Pagan?" repeated Mrs. Dacy, incredulously. "After all the money spent for missionary work?"

"Delightfully pagan!" agreed Mrs. Wayne. "They do not discard the gods of their ancestors even though they do, out of policy, accept the newer com-

mercial religions of the various missions. The Mormons are about the most progressive of the latter in the practical things of life, but they are usually of northern peoples, and carry no glad joy of life with them. They always made me think of the Puritans."

"Monica!"

"They did, Aunt Dacy. They are so self-righteous they make one savage. As a child I always preferred playing with the little Indians. We would gather flowers for the hidden shrine of their house god, and go to mass afterward, and hear the padre give thanks that the Indian false gods were forgotten! Even a child sees those colorful contrasts down there—it makes the life wider—more worth while. You come down with your notebooks."

"I am a weak young thing, and easily tempted," confessed Gilman. "If you would find for me somewhere an artist to beat the illustrations in Sargent's 'Woman of the Twilight' I will start tomorrow and do a 'Woman of the High-Noon,' and put him in the shade." The others laughed, and Sargent advised him to leave nothing vague or mystifying in the story. An author who did not spell out every fact clearly left a gate open for queries, and nice, lady-like notes, from nice, idle folks, who meant to help genius, but really only brought added trouble to the morning mail.

"Oh, I know that," stated Gilman. "I used to be loved for myself alone, now I am sought for because

I am a friend of Sargent's; *and* the things the dear girls want to know about him are beyond words!"

"Tell us, Gillie," begged Miss Mitford. "I want to know a lot of things myself, and I don't dare ask. How do the other girls go about it?"

Whereupon Gilman made promises to divulge secrets on the morrow if she would journey with him in the car across the moorland and afar from the ears of men.

He further told her that if she was very, very good, she could ride with him as he carried Mrs. Wayne home in the moonlight.

"I don't think I want to be carried," said Mrs. Wayne. "I can't see reason in getting out a machine for that short distance, but I shall be pleased to have you walk with me."

"You are the law, Madame Monica; but how would you feel if I snubbed your 'half rater' like that if you asked to give me a sail?"

"Oh, that's different! A boat is an actual necessity to cross the water at any point; but if I was in bathing dress, and needed to go the water distance from here to the bungalow, I'd ask you to swim with me."

"Declined with thanks, kind lady," he said, promptly. "No swimming bouts for me in that water, let Tony do it."

"Never again! I owe my precious life to the sons

of the sea who picked me off the rocks the last time I went under," said Tony.

"There," said Mr. Dacy, lifting a warning finger to Monica Wayne. "Now perhaps you will listen to me and give up that crazy sailing alone out here. It is not safe—anything is likely to happen you."

"Nothing has," she said, reassuringly, "and you are always here to wade out and lead me back."

As Hamilton Dacy had a horror of small boats and could not swim a stroke, the others laughed at the suggestion, and as they filed out on the veranda to watch the moon rise, he suggested that he call on her at the bungalow, and talk over the terms and legal settlements of which Hallet had spoken to her.

She looked at him a moment as if she had forgotten the subject, and then smiled a trifle wearily.

"Certainly, come over, Uncle Dacy," she said, kindly, "though I can't promise what I shall discuss with you; certainly not settlements—but come over."

Out on the lawn where the men were smoking, Tony sauntered over to Sargent, who was pacing alone by the pergola, and asked for a light for his cigar; receiving it, he fell into step until they reached the pergola where, he halted squarely.

"Surprised to find me here, Sargent?" he asked.

"Not at all," replied Sargent, frankly; "glad to see you."

"I'm not so civil," confessed Tony. "I've been

wondering why you selected this particular corner of the earth."

"Shall I get off?"

"It would n't do a bit of good," said Tony, shaking his head. "She 'd fancy you a martyr, and then she *would* be in love with you—I mean Nell."

"Oh, I see," and Sargent's amusement was expressed in his tone. "Well, have you a grudge to settle?"

"Not the slightest," said Tony, cheerfully, "but it 's this way: Miss Mitford promised to marry us both, promised me first; and you see the result—changed her mind! I 'm only waiting round to see if she won't change it again. I don't mean to take any unfair advantage, you know, only to stay in the race until I hear her wedding march. Understand?"

"Perfectly," said Sargent, smiling at the situation, "but if she objects, I may have to ask you to withdraw."

"She won't object," returned Tony, easily, "she has always been accustomed to extra personal attendants, and—I might as well be one of them."

"In that case we 'd better not both seem to neglect her at the same time," suggested Sargent, "else she might throw us over for Gilman or Hallet—let 's go back."

CHAPTER VI

A LITTLE later the moon came up out of the sea while the afterglow of the sun yet touched the western sky. Elinor Mitford declared it was selfish of Gillie, or any one man, to plan moonlight walks alone with Monica. She elected herself as chaperone and stated that there were others who craved moonlight walks by the sad sea waves.

To Sargent she whispered that he must get acquainted with her relatives, and had better begin with Monica. Then after pitching pennies, and drawing straws, to arrange the party, Gilman with Nanny and Tony Allen, remained with Mrs. Dacy, while the rest strolled out along the shore road, and Gilman, watching Mrs. Smythe-Orville gather up her fluffy draperies, drew Lulu aside and told her confidentially to listen for the car in about an hour.

The flowering shrubs of the wild growths hedged the road like a miniature jungle of bayberry, sumac, grape and wild sweet pea; the fragrance of them in the night met the salt air of the sea, and Sargent walked beside Monica Wayne and was content to walk in silence rather than utter words. Hamilton Dacy walked at her other hand, and occasionally tried to make conversation without succeeding very well.

He decided that Monica was tired, and they should have used the car.

The moon was touched ever so lightly by fleecy curtains of drifting white. Jupiter shone royally as he moved across the body of Scorpia, and Venus trembled far out on the edge of the world, and left a tiny dot of light on an arm of the sea.

Earth and sky was a harmony exquisite and tender with promise, while the waves thundering into the cove below them, smashing against the bulwark of titanic boulders, was a threat against the fragility of the mere human idlers strolling along the brink of the roaring deep.

"That sea is tigerish at high tide," declared Mr. Dacy. "It is one of the reasons, Monica, I wish your place was a little nearer our cottage, then we could keep an eye on you in bad weather."

"But no thoughtful farmer-fisherman took the trouble, some fifty years ago, to plant trees in the right spot nearer your cottage," remarked Mrs. Wayne. "I am thankful to him every summer day. I could not see myself living on a treeless shore."

Whereupon Mr. Dacy discoursed on the way in which she had taken an old rambling farmhouse and remodeled it, by the aid of much concrete, into a fair copy of an old Spanish-California dwelling. The work was barely two years old, and looked forty because of the old vines and trees.

"The fact is, Monica, if you ever wanted to put

that place on the market, your ancient mariner would need to use a lawn mower and pruning shears, it looks almost forlorn. You would have to spruce up."

"Thanks, Uncle Dacy, but I can't imagine it spruced up. I have worked too hard to keep it looking as if no one lived on it; your spruced up places lack atmosphere."

"Atmosphere! with all that booming at your door?" and he pointed an accusing finger towards the restless sea. Monica Wayne laughed and caught his hand.

"Don't call it 'that' in such a tone, Uncle Dacy; it is my lullaby, it is just near enough for the sound of the waves to rock me to sleep at night, and reminds me of—"

She ceased speaking, and Sargent could not tell whether it was to check expression of her remembrances or to listen to the group ahead of them; some one was singing, and Mrs. Wayne held up her hand for silence, and halted to listen.

It was Elinor Mitford, whose comforting gift was a rather well-trained soprano voice, and across the moonlight night it came to them with added sweetness, accompanied as it was by the deep, constant undertone of the sea —

In my garden of sleep where the poppies are spread,
I wait for the living alone with the dead
For a tower in ruins stands guard o'er the deep
At whose feet are green graves of dear women asleep.

"Where a tower in ruins keeps guard o'er the deep," repeated Sargent. "I never chanced to hear Nell sing that before, and I fancy there is only one place in the United States to which all of that song could apply — sea-cliff, poppies, and the tower where the graves are."

"Of course, it's on the other coast?" said Mr. Dacy, with a touch of irony.

"Indeed it is," affirmed Sargent; "strange how one forgets a place for a long time, or thinks he does, and all at once it begins to grow on him again, and pull him back."

"Well, if you did go back you would probably write now a very different sort of story of that poppy farm place than the one you wrote from your first impression."

"Why do you say *that?*"

"You would not see it quite the same way — difference in years and experience. Go back in five years and see if I'm not right."

Sargent stared at him a moment, and recalled the words of the old man under the moorish arches.

"I didn't suppose you had even read the story," he observed.

"Had to, too many curious folk asking questions about it. And, say, I've just solved the problem of its success."

"Thanks," observed Sargent, "perhaps you'll enlighten me."

"It's the youth of it, the daring, critical youth which condones nothing, and makes no compromise. Maturity knows compromises are a necessity of life, but that thing is a record of your impressions or emotions when you were ages younger than you are now."

"Not so many ages!"

"Oh, I don't mean actual years, but young in your sympathies, and intolerant of compromises. I refer especially to your drawing of that man; it seems a true picture, but you were so intolerant that it is difficult to see how a woman could have made sacrifices for him. He might have had some likable traits, but you could not concede that — too much youth and too much sympathy for the woman. People seem to like that combination if served with the right sauce. But you go back in five years!"

> Did they love as I love when they lived by the sea?
> Did they wait as I wait for the days that may be?
> O Life of my life! on the cliff by the sea.

The voice of the girl singing came to them again, and Sargent made no reply to the unexpected criticism of Dacy. He was listening to the song and looking at the girl beside him. She had taken no apparent interest in the discussion, but had moved a little apart, and was standing on a great boulder at the edge of the cliff looking down at the surf dashing into white foam in the moonlight. She was so slender, so girlish in form, that she suggested a gray bird poised above

the crashing sea. Her hands were clasped behind her, and her head was turned away from him, but he could see she was listening to the voice —

> Brief days of desire and long dreams of delight,
> They are mine when my poppy land cometh in sight,
> O heart of my heart! where the poppies are born
> I am waiting for thee in the hush of the corn!

"This moonlight is making even Nell sentimental," observed Dacy. "Monica, you give me the creeps the way you get to the very outer edge of that rock. Some day the water will undermine it, and then—"

"I shan't wait that long," she said, smiling at him over her shoulder, "but the sea is wonderful tonight, or else the sky! I never saw it quite this way before. Let us go and get Nell a guitar from the bungalow if she is impelled to bring poppy land to Massachusetts."

She walked on beside Sargent to where the others were singing on the rocks, and while they did not speak with each other, he felt again her mysteriously familiar closeness. At times he felt she must be conscious of it, else why was her speech so ready for others, and only silence for his portion.

He felt a hesitation in walking beside her into her own house, a curious hesitation; at the same time that he unconsciously resented the fact that the others ran pell-mell up the broad, shallow steps, as a middle-aged colored woman opened the door, letting the light stream out from a wide hall.

Nell and Hallet were in the lead, followed by Lulu and Joe, and Sargent found himself escorting Mrs. Smythe-Orville, who was lamenting the distance they had walked. It really was so much more than she had expected—and when one was not exactly rugged.

And it was thus he crossed the threshold of the house of Monica Wayne.

"How unusual!" murmured his charge, as they passed from the hall into a great living room. Then, with a little smile, she added, "If not duly impressed by the fact that the lady is a genius, one might say 'how peculiar!'"

In fact the interior of the house had unexpected character, half Spanish where dividing walls had been replaced by pillars supporting pointed arches, the lines of which were echoed by the windows to the north. They flanked the great open fireplace, reaching to the floor, and through them the wide stretch of water and wild shore could be seen bathed in the mellow light of the moon.

Candles were lit on the mantel and in sconces of the pillars by the colored woman, greeted cheerily by Nell as Maum Rosa; and the soft light showed that the grayish green plaster of the walls was but a frame for some wonderful color combinations in the Mexican rugs on the floor and couches and the rich Indian brown of pottery and the occasional white and red and gray of serape or belt of primitive tribes. On the walls were few pictures—all of them rather fine sketches in

pastel of old Mexican cathedrals, and occasionally an equally fine drawing of some of the sacred shrines of Yucatan. Before one of them Sargent halted in admiration—a great temple in the midst of a tropic wood. Carved serpents guarded the magnificent stairway, and the statue of a god of an ancient people lay broken at the foot of the steps.

"The others are beautifully done, but this is tragic," he observed. "All modern America has nothing to compare to the architecture of this forgotten people."

"They are all the work of my father," said Mrs. Wayne, "also this collection of things Mexican was his; only the house was arranged by me for their keeping."

"It is a fitting shrine," he answered. "One leaves all the prosaic world at the threshold."

She inclined her head slightly in acknowledgment of the compliment, but that was all. He wondered if her cool courtesy was deliberate and personal, or if she was merely shy. He could fancy it being the latter, and regarded her with renewed interest. After all, she was only a schoolgirl, and her position was such that the social world must as yet be a sealed book to her. The many volumes in the bookcases showed her to be a student in other matters than art, but if books and paints were her only companions it would explain much.

Yet what right had a girl with a face like hers to bury her youth in musty tomes? Her eyes under their straight brows were ever baffling to him—and

her mouth — what a fool the man Wayne must have been!

Thoughts of this sort are most unprofitable, and seeing Nell regard him quizzically, he left Mrs. Smythe-Orville to Dacy, and went over to her. She was tuning an old guitar on which were the red, green and white ribbons of Mexico.

"You sang beautifully, little girl," he said, approvingly, and she glanced up at him saucily.

"Much good it did do me," she retorted, "you never came near."

At his attempted explanation she only laughed and handed him the guitar.

"Monica has gone to look for some Spanish or Indian music. I am horribly jealous of Fannie Smith, but you can sing to her until I come back. I want to speak to Monica — you amuse these children."

She found Maum Rosa in the kitchen arranging some glasses on a tray, and stopped long enough to sniff the perfume of mint approvingly.

"Miss Mona gone to her own room a moment, I reckon," volunteered Maum Rosa. "Yes, she found that music stuff for you all. I reckon, Miss Elinor, she 's been havin' a right vigorous day, an' is all tired out."

There was a suggestion in her tone that the guests allow Miss Mona a moment of rest, which Miss Mitford mentally agreed was all right for the others —

but she was simply dying to see Monica alone, and of course Monica would not mind her!

So she ran up the stairs, and, finding the door ajar, and the light of a candle sending a bar of brightness across the hall, she opened it without knocking and found Monica Wayne standing at the open window looking out at the sea.

The sheets of music were in her hands clasped behind her, and the sound of the sea coming in the open window kept her from hearing the sound of steps until a hand was slipped into hers, when she turned with a startled cry.

"Nell!" she breathed, and sat down; then added, limply, "I'm glad it was you."

"Thanks, many," said Nell, "but what's the matter with you? You're a bundle of nerves. I'm dying to talk with you about a thousand things, but of course I couldn't with Fannie Smith along!"

"No," assented Mrs. Wayne, "of course not. I— I found some of the music. It is rather roughly done —I took down the notes myself and I am not distinguished, you know, in a musical way."

She spoke lightly, but there was a false note. Nell sensed it, and agreed mentally with Maum Rosa— Monica was tired. She would start the party home as soon as might be.

"I'll learn the songs, and sing them for you some other time," she said. "What is this—an Aztec love

song? Really Aztec? What a pretty title!—'Within My Dreams.'"

And by the candle light she hummed over the air while the other girl sat silent, looking out at the restless sea.

> Within my dreams thou art with me
> Though free my life may range afar.
> Within my dreams my spirits' sea
> Throbs warm beneath one glowing star.
> Though wide you range the forest through
> I wake with thee, deep in my heart I rest,
> When trembles in my ear the turquoise blue
> I know it is thy heart within my breast!
> Within my dreams thou ever art with me,
> E'en waking dreams!
> O Love! within my dreams!

"Say, Monica, if you ever took time to fall in love, you'd know that Indian song writer had been there before you," announced Nell, "but of course you never did."

"No, of course not," assented Monica Wayne again. "Shall we go down now?"

"But Monica! You should know I am dying to talk about Lane Sargent, and tell you how it happened. Haven't you any curiosity at all?"

"I really don't believe I have a great deal, Nell," agreed her hostess, "and you can tell me any time about the man who happens to be the center of the universe just now."

"Monica, you don't like him!" and the voice of her visitor was charged with utter disappointment, "and I had counted on you so much — so much!"

"My dear Nell," said Monica Wayne, putting her arms around the girl who had dropped down on the window seat beside her, "if you are in love with the man, as your insight into the psychology of the Aztec love song would suggest, why should you care in the least whether any one else approved of him or not? While you concede I can't take time for those emotional lapses, I can at least imagine that an affair of love is between two people, and that all the rest of the world is unimportant, and the opinion of the world is not worth even a smile."

Nell Mitford sat up suddenly and looked at her as she sat, serene and cool, in the mingled light of the candle and the moon.

"That's all right, Monica," she agreed. "We all have moments when we feel like that, though I can't see how *you* know it; but the rest of the time we have to remember certain conventions and incomes — first, last, and all the time — incomes! Lane Sargent would be a fine catch on his family alone for any heiress, but I don't chance to be an heiress. We've been chums for ages, but he could not have afforded to propose to me unless he had something besides name, and I could not afford to accept him if he had not an income along with the name! It's all right for you, Monica, to be superior to the dollars and cents — you are a sort of

free lance in search of art. But the rest of us who are not artists have to fill our lives with other things, and we can't afford to ignore folks and family. I do need to know that people approve — it braces one up in — in many ways."

"Does the poor child need bracing up already?" and there was a little mocking note in Monica Wayne's voice. "As you've been engaged most of your life to some nice boy — is this the third or fourth victim? I should imagine you were impervious to the opinion of mere relatives."

The girl looked at her reproachfully, and pettishly tapped her white shoe on the Indian rug.

"I did hope for something better from you, Monica," she declared. "The others were just nice boys, that is what makes the difference. Half the time I am so proud of Lane I want to shoot off fire crackers, or wave a flag to celebrate; and the other half I am scared to death to be left alone with him."

"I should not imagine him so formidable."

"He's not. He is the dearest, nicest fellow ever, and when we were merely chums, we were thick as thieves; too jolly for words. I went to him with all my woes, and learned one or two of his. It was fine, simply ideal."

"Well?"

"Well," repeated the other defiantly, "now that we are engaged I — well — I come to you to be braced

up, and I don't know who he goes to! I only hope he finds some one more sympathetic."

Monica Wayne laughed, and drew Nell to her, shaking her as she would a playful kitten.

"Oh, you people!" she said, derisively. "You are all such spoiled children, surfeited with sweets. I candidly think that your present woes are limited to the fear that the latest man may call a halt on your flirtations. You can't rule him as you did Tony."

"I said you weren't sympathetic," retorted Nell, accusingly, "but I did count a lot on you and Lane taking to each other, and you don't at all!"

"What an idea!"

"Can't I see? You look over him, and across him, every place but at him. And you know, he isn't used to that; I have seen him a dozen times this evening staring at you—puzzled beyond words—and you two could have so many interests in common if you would only be nice."

"My dear, I fear that niceness is not my strong point," said Monica Wayne, a trifle wearily, "and I have several things to do besides trying to make a good impression on your latest sweetheart."

"You wouldn't have to try," asserted Nell, stoutly. "All you need do is be your own dear, natural self, as you were last summer with Tony, who adores you."

"Does he, indeed?" queried Mrs. Wayne, smiling. "Since he is his own man again, I presume I dare confess that his affection is most ardently returned?"

Elinor Mitford got up abruptly, straightened her skirt, and adjusted the bandeau of blue ribbon about her fluffy blonde hair.

"Monica, you are a devil when you are not a dear," she observed.

Monica Wayne laughed outright.

"Which, being interpreted, means that you want both those lovely creatures, but want me to take either one of them off your hands occasionally, while you flirt with the other! I love you dearly, Nell, but I'm too busy to look after your men folks. I can't half look after my own."

"Yours!" echoed the girl, scornfully. "You'd seem more human if you did look after some of them, and it might cultivate your sympathies."

"With true love?" asked the other, mockingly—"the wonderful true love of your summer circus set! Nell, you all seem to me pretenders, playing the game for pastime or to fit in some social scheme. Not red blood enough in the whole group to get up a revolution against convention, unless we except those two children out there," she added, as they saw Lulu and Joe run down the walk in the moonlight.

"Well, I like that," observed Nell. "Of all women, for you to talk true love and red blood, and emotionalism in marriage—*you!*"

"I was younger than Lulu, I did not know," said Monica Wayne, simply; "also," she added, "I had little choice. It may seem odd to you, but I did not

know a single American woman to whom I could speak. I had only known men, and some Mexican and Indian women."

"What a cat I am!" said Nell, remorsefully; "and what an awful situation! You know, Monica, you never have told any of us even that much before."

"Haven't I? Perhaps there seemed no reason why I should. No, it did not seem to me awful. I am as much a fatalist as an Indian. It is all a part of the training for some game, and we never know what the game may be. Only the gods see the end of the race!"

"O you pagan!" and the girl's arm slipped about her affectionately. "Come on down, or the rest will hate me for keeping you away. I shall immediately take Lane out to the most romantic corner I can find in this nookery of yours, and sing that Aztec love song to him just to let you see we can be romantic."

"Yes, if you try hard enough," said Monica Wayne, as they went down the stairs together.

Maum Rosa came in with a tray of tinkling glasses, but McLane Sargent was not there either to accept this offering or listen to Nell's song. He had wandered out along the cliffs or under the old trees; and Nell, with a smiling, defiant glance at Mrs. Wayne, took his glass and the Aztec song and started in search of him. She looked around for the guitar, but Lulu had confiscated that, and the soft clear notes of a fandango came to them occasionally above the subdued roar of the breakers. The one musical love of Joe

was a banjo for choice or a guitar for second place.

"It sounds rather pretty, doesn't it?" asked Mrs. Wayne of Hallet, as they crossed to the door to listen, and then stepped outside. But Mrs. Smythe-Orville was plainly annoyed each time the high sweet notes reached her where she sat by the window with Mr. Dacy, sipping the refreshing liquid from the slender mint crowned glass.

"Really, Mr. Dacy," she said at last, "I shall have to ask your assistance while here in regard to Lulu. She is incorrigible when your nephew is around, just a wild tomboy. On the other side I must say she was a trifle more subdued, it is so necessary in order to have a girl advantageously settled in life."

"Joe will not interfere with your matrimonial plans," said Mr. Dacy, reassuringly. "He has no money of his own, and little interest in anything except fishing tackle."

"But the girl has a perfect mania for ineligibles," sighed her stepmother, "and her manner is growing more unrestrained each day since our return to America — so lacking in repose!"

"Oh, she has plenty of time to acquire repose," suggested Mr. Dacy, easily, "and don't you really feel that sixteen is rather young to consider marriage for Lulu?"

"Not at all." The decision of the reply noted that the mint-flavored refreshment brought by Maum

Rosa had quite aroused Mrs. Smythe-Orville from her customary languor. "*I* was married, the first time, at sixteen. Girls become entirely too independent if allowed to range much longer."

"But her education—"

"A resident governess or social secretary can teach a woman all a wife need know in order to manage an establishment. I don't in the least approve of colleges for girls—teaches them to know more than their husbands! No," she added, emptying the glass of which he relieved her, "I will allow no sentimental nonsense to upset my plans for Lulu. She has a wonderful opportunity, and I shall see that she accepts it. The man is perfectly infatuated with her ingenuousness. But—" (and she sighed regretfully) "he made a mistaken marriage, and a divorce is being arranged. As soon as it is settled we leave for the other side."

George Hallet, standing in the doorway, looking out on the moonlit sea with Monica, and listening to the strains of the guitar, could not but hear also bits of the conversation within, and he grew alert, a big wrinkle between his brows. Monica Wayne, finding some slight remark of hers unheeded, glanced at him, and realized that he had forgotten her and was listening—actually listening—to the words of Mrs. Smythe-Orville.

Amused, she was about to reënter, when he put his hand on her arm with a slight gesture of detention,

and, surprised, she stood silent in the doorway as Mr. Dacy asked with an evident desire to appear interested in the much-desired son-in-law.

"And what does Lulu say to this pearl of a husband you have selected for her?"

"Oh, part of the time she was flattered by his attentions — and no wonder, his place is a palace! — and at other times pretended she did not like him; all romantic nonsense, of course, or else a clever trick to interest him, and he certainly was quite infatuated with her. Not like him!" and her tone was skeptic to a degree. "Why, the man has all kinds of money, and as her guardian I shall see that she acts sensibly, and marries him."

Monica Wayne pushed aside the detaining hand of Hallet and stepped past him into the room as Nell and Sargent came up the path. They had halted in the shadow for an instant regarding the man and woman standing so close, with hands touching. It looked quite sentimental and made them each recall Hallet's impressive manner to her on the lawn and in the cottage. Could it be that Hallet, good, safe, steady-going Hallet, had really a chance?

Nell looked up, smiling into Sargent's face, hoping for comprehension and sympathy; but he did not seem in the least interested in the possible love affair which she hoped might become a fact. His eyes were on Hallet, a cool, measuring gaze, as Monica Wayne

brushed past him and went direct to Mrs. Smythe-Orville.

"I heard your words," she said, eagerly, earnestly. "I—pardon me for speaking—but I do not think you can realize quite what it means to marry little Lulu to a man for whom she has no real liking; she is such a child, and childhood is so wonderful, let her keep it! It is worth more than the money or the palace of any man, and it can never be bought back."

Mrs. Smythe-Orville regarded her with satirical, lifted brows.

"The idea is very pretty, Mrs. Wayne," she conceded, sweetly, "but you artists are not always practical. Society has to be, and someone has to see that girls marry the right men."

"But Lulu is such a child—"

"And a very difficult one to manage," added the other. "The sooner she is safely married the better, and her position as the lady of Castlemar will be so—"

Monica Wayne interrupted her with a sharp cry. She stood suddenly very erect, and all the tones of persuasion or conciliation were gone from her voice.

"Castlemar!" she repeated, and Nell gasped at the force of the utterance, while Mr. Dacy got to his feet bewildered. "You mean to marry little Lulu to the man who has bought the estate of Castlemar on the Italian coast?"

"Well, what of it?" and Mrs. Smythe-Orville re-

garded her hostess with startled and somewhat resentful eyes.

But Monica Wayne made no reply to her. She flung out accusing hands to the two men in the room.

"Uncle Dacy, did you know of this?" Dacy shook his head in protest, but she scarcely heeded it, as she turned to the younger partner. "Mr. Hallet, do you hear? You want me to divorce that man so he may ruin the life of a child I love, the daughter of a man who loved me! Well, I will tell you what I will do, I will divorce your master of Castlemar on one condition and one only—that he marries the woman with whom he left America!"

Mr. Dacy looked as bewildered as Mrs. Smythe-Orville, who demanded sharply:

"Am I to understand that the woman in Europe was not his wife?"

Again her question was to Mrs. Wayne, who made no reply.

"A marriage of the left hand," said Hallet, significantly, and the questioner threw up her hands with an exclamation of disgust.

"Oh, the horrid, brazen creature!"

"But you would not shrink from the *man*," said Mrs. Wayne, turning to her with a strange smile. "I think most people know that she was not a bad woman. She gave up her world, her family, everything, for her devotion to that man. I pity her infinitely!"

"Pity!" gasped the astounded lady whose palace of dreams was crumbling about her at every sentence, "pity her, *you,* the woman who has the legal right to the position she held — the wealth — the luxury!" and her eyes wandered vaguely over the simply furnished room, and its simply gowned mistress. "You pity her — oh — and her diamonds!"

"She has more right to them than I," said Monica Wayne, indifferently.

"Monica!" said Mr. Dacy, severely.

"You are his wife!" reminded Hallet, but Monica looked from one to the other with the same strange little smile.

"But she was the woman who loved him," she said, quietly, "and that *should* make a difference, Uncle Dacy."

The sweet notes of the guitar sounded above the murmur of the sea, and far down the road could be seen the light of Gilman's car as he sped through the moonlight.

And Elinor Mitford, clutching Sargent's arm in nervous excitement, drew him in silence from the portal into the dusk of the shadowy trees.

"Now you know, Monica!" she whispered. "Do you wonder that I love her?"

But he evidently had no opinion on the subject, for he did not reply.

CHAPTER VII

THE next day Mrs. Smythe-Orville was confined to her room, ill from nervous shock, and Mrs. Dacy realized that all her work for secrecy as to the Glyndon Waynes was love's labor lost; in one short hour Monica had made the most and the worst of it.

Sargent surprised his fiancée by the suggestion that they get married at once and spend the summer in Europe. Mrs. Dacy was quite convinced that he feared a further family scandal (what might not one expect from a woman who openly denounced a husband as Monica had done?), and that he meant to get Nell safely out of it before there were further complications. She sincerely hoped her niece would be appreciative of the chivalry in the thought.

But that young lady declared that she liked nice long engagements, also there was the question of a trousseau. To be married without all the fuss and furbelows did not meet with her approval, why — they had scarcely gotten used to the engagement yet!

Also she had decided she wanted a portrait of Lane and one of herself painted by Monica before the wedding. Altogether it was out of the question to rush affairs of that sort.

Whereupon Sargent decided that if he was not to

get married, he had better get back to work, which he promptly did, going back to New York in the midst of the summer season, to the dismay and disgust of Miss Mitford.

She went over to the bungalow for sympathy, but was laughed at.

"You only wanted a celebrity to show off for the summer, Nell," decided Monica; "but if a man lives up to a reputation such as Mr. Sargent enjoys, he can't do it by carrying your parasol. Of course the man has to keep up his work."

"Of course you would see it that way," said the aggrieved and lonely one, "but it's spoiling our summer. Aunt Martha is sulky, and—"

"With me, I suppose!"

"Well, you certainly did help. She and Fannie have agreed as to the immorality of your plans for your husband. They have grown quite chummy over the subject."

Monica Wayne laughed as she bent over a great work table where she was unrolling sheets of paper and arranging for some preliminary drawings.

"I can fancy they would," she observed. "Their standards are about the same, though type varies in the outer shell."

"Well, you'd better brace up for a bit of trouble out of it any way."

"Why?"

"Can't you see that Aunt Martha is no longer in

doubt as to the whereabouts of her beloved nephew? Fannie Smith has of course told her oceans of things, and Aunt Martha feels that it is her Christian duty to write Glyn."

"Um — yes — Christian duty! Have you any idea of what the lady's special Providence suggests she should suggest to the wandering lamb of the family fold?"

"You won't like it," said the girl, warningly.

"That is not so unlikely either, if those two ladies have charge of affairs," conceded Monica, "but even so —"

"Oh, I don't know that Fannie has any idea of Aunt Martha's plans, but I know she has a plan. You remember the snapshot Tony took of you last summer sailing your own boat? You wore that blue suit with the white Tam-o'-Shanter and looked like a dream in it!"

"Thanks; but what has that to do with Aunt Dacy's plan?"

"Well, you know Tony made some dandy prints of it — has one framed in his boat — and he couldn't well afford to refuse a copy to Aunt Martha, could he?"

"N-no, I suppose not," agreed Monica, slowly, as she gave special and thoughtful attention to fastening a sheet of paper on a drawing board.

"And he could not guess that she wanted it to slip in a letter sent to Glyndon Wayne."

"What!"

"Heavens! Monica, don't glare at me like that, I am not the blessed peace maker. I'd just as soon be blest some other way. Also she sent the photo Tony took of you and me together—a good likeness."

Monica Wayne walked to the window and stood with her back to Nell. She stood there so long, staring seaward, that her visitor grew nervous, then fidgety, then apologetic.

"Don't cut the whole family on that account, Monica," she said at last. "I suppose she thought that if he could be interested in that gawky girl—"

"Lulu is not gawky, Nell. She is a dear, winsome child, and is, I suppose, just the type to interest a man who has tired of everything else."

"Well—she could n't hold a candle to you, Monica, and I suppose Aunt Martha thought—"

"That is where you are mistaken again," interrupted Monica; "at Lulu's age I was not one-half so interesting as she. I was a lean, tanned little imp with sunburnt hair, and an ugly temper. That is the only way Glyndon Wayne remembers me. If he had not owed a—a relative of mine a lot of money, he would never have offered to pay the debt by marrying me; and if I had owned an American relative to whom I could go, I would not have spoiled his life by marrying him."

"Spoiled *his* life?" and Nell's tone was skeptical.

"Yes," assented Monica, wearily. "He is the one

who has needed freedom most. If I could trust him to marry the right woman I would give it to him. That is where his duty lies. But so long as he won't see it—" and she shook her head and resumed her work at the table.

Nell sat looking at her, trying to picture the lean, sunburnt imp in the woman whose every curve was of grace, whose skin was of velvet softness, whose eyes were deep wells of mystery under lashes and brows of black, though the brown hair held glints of sunshine as it circled her head in a braided crown. Nell decided that she affected that style of dressing her hair in order to look older than she was—which was a great mistake. That still dignity of hers added to the illusion; and under it all was the heart of a girl—a girl so charming that it accounted for her choice of a home near the people who offered her hospitality, who would, in a way, be a social protection.

"I made a mistake in coming here to live," she said, as she lifted her head and looked around the great room. "It was Uncle Dacy who won me. He said I would be sheltered here, and I, even then I had begun to know that a girl needs to feel there is shelter somewhere."

"But, Monica, you are here such a little time, in the summer, and you are such a bird of flight at other times, that you can always go if—well, if the very worst should happen, and you were annoyed here."

"I don't think I had better wait for that very

worst; yet I have liked the place — it seemed a sort of haven to come back to; a central camp where I could keep my traps and toggery. I could sell it easily, of course, though Uncle Dacy insists I would need to prune the shrubs and spruce it up."

"The vandal! He talks like a crude real estate agent. Uncle Dacy's artistic bump is a hollow. Gillie and the children are coming over for me in the car. You don't mind them scampering over promiscuously, do you?"

"No, I don't mind, and Maum Rosa has great joy in them all. It is the trouble of her life that I live so much alone."

"Well, in all these years I should think she'd get used to it."

"She never does — quite. And though she was my mother's nurse I never saw her from my babyhood until my return to Georgia. She thoroughly approves of your family parties, and loves to fuss around and cook up surprises for you; says there is always something doing when you are here."

"She is a dear, normal soul," decided Nell, curling up on a window seat and watching Monica at work, "and she is quite right about you living alone. You should marry some nice chap and make him happy ever afterwards!"

"As the laws are so unfair to women," complained her hostess, "and only allows us one husband at a time—"

Nell shied a pillow at her, from which she ducked, and laughed.

"Since this remains a sad fact," she continued, "I don't see how I am legally to practice polyandry unless I emigrate to India."

"Poly—what? India?"

Nell sat up eagerly, her blue eyes open wide. Monica laughed at her and nodded.

"India," she repeated. "Certain districts where ladies can have as many husbands as they can take care of."

"Well, wouldn't that jar you?" remarked Nell, slangily. "Say, I always did wonder what the attraction for women was in the dressing gowned priests of the East who are so popular lately. Every black-and-tan who gets himself up in a yellow robe, a turban, and a self-communion expression, can be star of the evening for whole towns full of women. They all say they are seeking a new religion, or devoting themselves to a new cult, but I have a hunch that they are seeking the trail to those nice emancipated districts where woman's rights have been settled the way she wants them!"

"Elinor!" and the reproving tone imitated Mrs. Dacy. "I trust you do not allow any one outside of the family to hear you make use of such regrettable language!"

"Oh, you humbug," laughed Elinor, joyously. "But is that correct about India?"

"Some parts of India; thinking of emigrating?"

Nell flounced around on the window seat with her back to the speaker.

"If you could convince the last two men you promised to marry," continued Monica Wayne, teasingly; but Nell flounced around again, facing her with a scowl.

"I wish to goodness *you* would fall in love!" she burst out vindictively. "It would teach you a whole lot, and I hope I may be there to see it when it happens!"

"Yes, dear child," said Monica, soothingly, "I'll carry a banner to tell you when."

CHAPTER VIII

IN Manhattan, a month later, McLane Sargent turned from his desk and walked over to a lounging chair as he cut open a large, square envelope containing many sheets inscribed with the angular penmanship of Elinor Mitford, and smiled as he noted the heading of the letter,—

DACY'S HARBOR, MASS.

MY DEAR MR. SARGENT:—

I hope you take notice that I am duly polite to a man whom I don't seem to know very well these days!

You may not be "my Mr. Sargent" at all! I don't know whose you are, but I do know that this has been the most infernal summer ever!

It's all very well to write me that you are deep in a new novel, and that Art is mistress for the moment, but what about the rest of the time?

If I had ever dreamed that you were not coming back, I would have accepted Nanny's invitation for the yacht trip. Gillie went, also Fannie and Lulu. I get lovely letters about their lovely times up at Boothbay Harbor, and then I go over and camp all over Monica's place, and wonder how she stands being alone all the time, when it nearly kills me in a week!

Of course there are folks here — relatives! The place is overrun with them, but I would start this minute and join Nanny Allen if Aunt Martha was not so awful about it! I'm sorry I was ever engaged to Tony, for it seems the pro-

prieties decide I can't go on his yacht even with his sister as chaperone! I tell Aunt Martha you don't care, and it would be all right, but she looks at me over her eye glasses and says in her most precise way, "Elinor, I am astonished!"

She doesn't tell me whether it is at me or at you! Cousin Huldah is here from Boston, and while she can't, of course, approve of New York, she has brought with her the latest and biggest hit in the world of romance (so far as sales go — which is up in the million!) to show that even Manhattan, with all its crudeness, can evolve a near-risque chronicle of real life (all college girls are dippy over it!) and yet never cross the forbidden line as you do with your Mexican saint-sinner! This is her way of making a protest because I quarreled with Tony, and his barrels of money, and became yours truly! I wish you had time to read it — I mean the "*Chronicle from Life,*" an artist's life! The heroine is a lovely creature, formed by Venus in a happy moment. She flees from an artistic, hypnotic villain, and finds shelter in the bachelor apartment of the man she adores. He is a highly emotional creature as well as a husky athlete. He has fallen from grace morally, and temporarily socially, but is really a noble soul, if the women would only let him alone — which they won't! (Lane, dear, does all masculine genius have to hide from the sweet creatures who find their ideals too late?) I don't mean the women of the twilight type, but the "papa's darling" and "hubby's pet" sort, whose adoring natures require the romance of a kindred soul while everyday hubby is earning bread and butter! When I marry you, I want a clause in the contract allowing me to read your mail — some one will have to guard you from the dear things, to judge from the unusual sort of interest "*Twilight*" has aroused. Your point of view is *so* improper, Cousin Hul-

dah says! To return to our hero — he has as companion in his lonely moments, a brandy bottle. He talks to it in order to give vent to the noble sentiments of his soul! He would voice love to the Venus creature, but that he has fallen from grace, his inspiration for work is gone, and beyond the brandy bottle he sees only the grave!

This is the psychological moment when the persecuted heroine, who secretly adores him, turns blindly to his door for refuge. She begs him to save her from the hypnotic villain for whom she has been posing to earn mere bread and butter. She clings to him, inarticulate and half fainting, just as the electric lights are turned off by the gods — or the janitor!

To make the situation more thrilling, some convivial companions had left the remains of a lunch scattered about — cheese! A hungry mouse, lured by the odor, ventures after the crumbs, just as the husky of the brandy bottle, and the noble sentiments, has firmly unlaced the clinging fingers. But she hears that mouse! There is a scream in the dark, the fear of the unseen is upon her, he lifts her in his strong arms, she cuddles her cheek into the hollow of his neck, and begs his protection. And the night passes and the dawn breaks and in his arms she is asleep — the trustful child of Venus.

I can't make out whether he stood there all night protecting the lovely thing in his arms against the mouse; any way, there are whispers of the shy young creature, and murmurs of reassurance, and long lines of asterisks in between — spelling breathless suspense for the reader; but nothing happens.

And in the morning mail a letter comes with the news that a dear, maiden aunt has died and left him her sole heir; and the two breakfast in his rooms, and start out to buy wedding togs!

Now I know Cousin Huldah regards this as the proper kind of love story; and, as I told you, the girls are crazy about it. It is really proper, yet so nearly not so! All the breathless, doubtful, *almost* improper moments were really the fault of the mouse!

Why can't you do just one like that to square yourself with our New England relatives? They shake their heads over the big sales of your *Woman of the Twilight.* Aunt Martha said yesterday that it would only have taken a few pages more to have had a death-bed marriage for your Mexican black sheep, and thus showed that their intentions were proper!

I am only passing it along as it comes to me, so if I am not an inspiration it isn't my fault! I tried to talk to Monica about it, but she was no comfort. I did not dare tell Cousin Huldah *her* reminiscences of Mexicans who regarded marriage as a useless expense, and a trick of the church to get extra money from the priest for absolution! Also she says they were often dear, harmless people! Can you fancy Aunt Martha hearing that?

I do wish you had talked more with Monica — she is the only one among us who has lived near the sort of people you wrote of. I say "near," yet Mexico and California are both so big that you might never have been within a thousand miles of her! But I did hope you two would take to each other, and you ran away at the first glance!

She is having her own troubles. Aunt Martha, following the thing she calls her Christian duty, is making the trouble. Lord deliver me from the folks who decide they are divinely called upon to adjust all the family affairs!

Our dear cousin Glyndon thinks he wants to come back. I had a brief, shaky note from him, also a love of a bracelet — a sapphire in dull Etruscan gold. He wants to know

if Monica is really as beautiful as the pictures Aunt Martha sent him — he seems doubtful. I wrote him I thought Monica had a beautiful *spirit,* and that sort of nature rather blinded friends to any physical imperfections! I felt like a brute to even hint that Monica had a physical imperfection — for she has n't; she is about the most perfect creature I ever expect to see! If I were a sculptor I would model her as an Aphrodite. She is as strong as steel under that velvety skin. I only wish you had seen her in the water, or managing her own boat. If I had dared tell dear cousin Glyn what a wonder she is, he would be here on the first steamer, with his bank book and Aunt Martha to plead for him. Not that he cares for her, only if she was handsome, and would open a house in town for him, she would bring back the people! I think he is sick of Europe, and of going around under a cloud. Too many of his sort over there!

Monica doesn't say a word, but I see her looking over the place, and making little changes, and know it is with a view to selling it if living is made too unpleasant for her. When we marry, I want one corner of our house sacred to Monica alone; else she will drift away from all of us some day, and leave no trail.

Glyn's surprise over those pictures is funny—he seems to think it is some family scheme to get him back and reform him; that's why he wrote to me! He knows precious well I would never waste time trying to reform him! He states that he can't see a trace of the scrawny, thin-faced, evil-tempered little ranger in this lovely girl of the picture — Tony made a snapshot of her for me. I am sending you a copy, for I want you to see that there *is* a likeness to those drawings, not in full face, perhaps, but in general character.

I am ever so proud of the special edition of the story

you are bringing out. What is the "new" drawing you mention as frontispiece? Does that mean that you are again in communication with your Mystery Lady? I can stand a certain amount of that so long as I am on the inside, but if you start blanketing the proposition, I'll divorce you!

Monica told us of a simple and charming method by which the Indian women of a certain tribe issue a decree of divorce if the man in the case refuses to play the game right. She simply closes her door against him and the thing is settled — the woman decides. The state laws are not called into action. The man toddles home to his own folks. Aunt Martha says it is a heathen and unlawful social condition, and Monica said, in her sweetest way, that she did not in the least mind being a heathen, and that she thought the tribal custom was a very good law — as to live with the man when she did not want to, would be hopelessly immoral!

So you can have an idea how close the dove of peace is hanging over this shore! They are nice and polite to each other, but Aunt Martha can't get over the things Monica said that night; neither can Fannie Smith!

Do break away and come up! I never did need a man around the place so badly. There are some cousins here, but they are not worth flirting with!

I'll have to pay excess baggage on this; and when I take my pen in hand to indite chronicles of this length to the man out of sight you can wager there is nothing doing at our camp!

If you don't come, it will be me for Boothbay Harbor; they want Monica, too! Be good! NELL.

Sargent opened another envelope addressed in the same writing, and from it fell the picture of which she

wrote, a slender white figure guiding her boat through a white-capped sea. There was a crisp sparkle in the picture, a snappy wind sent spray flying as the bow cleaved the water. With her feet braced against the dip of the boat to leeward she stood poised, confident, and erect, the graceful figure outlined clearly from shoulder to instep by the wind whipping her skirts about her. Her hair braided in schoolgirl fashion gave him a new idea of her; here she was herself, a slender boyish girl, laughing as she drove her little sailboat over the lift of the waves.

He could only see her ear and cheek and chin, yet there was joy in it and youth and a charm alluring. In a way it was also familiar. He had never seen her joyous. She had been gay, and a trifle ironic, and her eyes held one; yet there had been no care-free joyous abandon such as one could understand in this picture of the graceful, boyish sailor.

Was it because she was of the same type as the drawings in the little book that the thought of her was a close, intimate thing? For he no longer even denied the fact that it was so. There was something marvelous in her closeness, in the way her voice came to him—in the memory of the one little moment when he had held her hand; and the eyes—how marvelous they were in their baffling witchery; gray shadowed flame! There was not a glance she had given him which he could not recall and see again with his own eyes closed.

Not since he was twenty had any woman creature thus made herself a part of every waking hour, and then it had been a wild boy's passion for a girl who used him as kindling; who gave caress for caress in the abandon of despair ere she turned away to sell herself for a few millions and a wedding ring. The hurt had gone rather deep. It had been more than one year before he had been able to greet her with the self-restraint desirable, or note her as one of the social leaders of a much envied set, without the mad memories of stolen hours sweeping over him.

Then, in rebellion against the slavery of the social game, the emptiness all the wedding ring and the millions had won for her, she tried to call him back, and —lost him eternally.

He realized then that the loss of his last illusion could be even a more poignant thing than the loss of the pretty pirate who stole sweets where it was safe to steal them, but never lost track of the thing she had been trained to look for—money!

Girls had been merely girls in his life since then—charming or not, as it happened; interesting always, yet leaving him master of himself. The safe frankness of Nell had appealed to him more than had beauty or charm of any girl for years. Only once had the lure of the unknown cast a glamour over his imagination through the drawings for his *Woman of the Twilight.*

But that had been a chapter of its own in his life,

and the chapter was ended; except that it had, for a time, brought back the mystery of youth's illusions and held all the suggestion of romance, an idyll of the dusk of life. The unknown artist was to his imagination as a veiled woman of the East whose lute had vibrated for him for a little moment ere the lattice closed! It had not belonged at all to the usual experiences of life, and but for the written statement that she was not free, and could write him no more, he would have allowed no obstacles to stand in the way of his finding her.

Yet she had written him once more at least, and after reading Nell's letter a second time he took from a desk the drawing he used as frontispiece for the special edition of the book, and read the typed letter accompanying it,—

MAN:

I said I would not write, but a dream has set me to work, and the dream was of your book. I do not know what the drawing means, I only drew what the dream brought me. It may be a ship of life, gray, gray with only the very tips of the sails touched by white light. I seemed waiting, in the dream, for the light to grow and spread over the gray of the sea, and dissolve the mists, and show me what was beyond — and beyond!

Yet again I was thankful that the white light did touch it, though only the top of the sails. It seems to belong to you, so I send it. The ship, as you see, is going out — far out into the deeper dusk — as I am.

To you the light!

The drawing was in softest, warmest gray. It made Sargent think of certain Japanese pictures, so simple were the lines, yet so satisfying in the suggestions.

There was a gray shore where the mists rolled, and out of the mists the vessel like a fleeing bird spread gray sails. The hull was merely suggested, also the grace of it, and only the tips of the sails caught a gleam of white light from some unseen source — some glancing ray piercing the gray mists and outlining the ship of dreams in a crown of white.

The thing fascinated him, and he deliberately put it out of sight that the thoughts it suggested be not encouraged to come between him and the work he had to do.

But as he placed it on his desk, and knew that each view of it was more satisfying than the last, his eyes wandered to the smaller picture sent by Nell — of another vessel heading out to sea, but a very tiny vessel buoyant in the sparkling light, and the figure of the girl vibrant with life and grace, and a daring, boylike instead of girlish. Where, in what land of dreams had she thus crossed his vision before?

It was not any one feature, or any one line of figure by which she brought to him the fleeting witchery of nearness and a sort of kinship; it was as much her voice, and the trend of her thought. What other girl would ever have given such an ultimatum as she gave Hallet and Dacy that night?

Yet he was evidently the only one of the group who

was not even surprised, and his joy in her daring was altogether absurd. It accounted for his silence, and he had come away half afraid she might realize the enchantment by which he was possessed. He could fancy the mockery in those wonderful eyes and the slight ironic curve of the adorable mouth.

He sat looking at the two boats — sparkling life and shadowed mystery — and smoked until clouds hid them at times, and helped the gray ship to added atmosphere.

He was so engaged when a knock sounded at the door and George Hallet came in. Sargent greeted him heartily, offering him cigars, something in a glass, and a lounging chair.

"Thanks for all," and Hallet accepted the latter with evident pleasure. "I did not call up to ask if you were at leisure because I didn't want to risk being turned down; one never knows what barriers genius may erect, so I took a long chance."

"Do it again. When I am working too hard to see folks, there's nothing doing with the phone and no doors are opened."

He was preparing some fragrant refreshment at a cabinet, and the odor of limes was on the air. While his hands were busy at the pleasant task, his mind was alert and was not above curiosity. Though he knew Hallet casually, and had for him a real admiration, there had never been any chumminess between them; Hallet had never before been to his rooms, and his manner indicated that his call was not merely a casual

social matter, his pleasure at the open door was too apparent.

"Another masterpiece?" he queried, waving his hand towards sheets of manuscript scattered on the floor, where they had been accidentally brushed from the desk. "I hope you treat us to sunshine and happiness instead of—"

Sargent smiled at the halt in his speech.

"They all take me to task for seeing the shadows too clearly," he agreed, "so don't think I am at all thin-skinned about it. I am doing a mystery story this time—turning an actual experience into copy—and as the mystery has never been solved I have a new sort of work to do."

He still stood at the cabinet pouring the fragrant beverage from a pitcher into two tall slender glasses, and turning to offer one to Hallet perceived that he was giving little heed to the theme of the new novel. He was leaning on the arm of the chair staring at the pictures on the desk.

"Like that?" he asked as he dropped into his own chair and lifted his glass to his guest ere drinking. "It is the frontispiece for the special edition of the *Woman of the Twilight.* Entirely symbolic. What would you call it—a ship of life destined to the mists of the half light? But the ray of white touching it rather lifts it out of the thought of shadows—makes it a poetic dream-like thing, with a suggestion of Japan, don't you think so?"

"Yes," said Hallet, slowly, still gazing at the desk. "It has that suggestion, but it was not the pastel I was looking at; it was the picture of Mrs. Wayne."

"You have good eyes," observed Sargent. "How could you tell who it was at that distance when the face scarcely shows?"

"I don't know, just the character and poise, I suppose. It is very distinctive."

"Very, else I should not be its temporary host. Nell sent it to show me there really was a sort of likeness to the woman in my book illustrations; not that she needed to send extra evidence. The type is the same, and, as you say, distinctive."

"Yes," conceded Hallet, "very, and I presume that is one of the pictures Mrs. Dacy used in her efforts to bring her nephew back to America; or am I allowed to presume that, as a prospective member of the family, you have been introduced to that late laudable movement?"

His tone was so ironic that Sargent looked at him sharply.

"Nell tells me of it today," and he picked up her letter, folding it carefully and slipping it in the envelope. "She also writes herself down as a prophetess of troubles that may arise from the family interference."

Hallet drained his glass, and, rising to his feet, crossed the room to the window, where he stared down the avenue at the endless crowds of people.

There had been a shower of rain, and the sun, gleaming yellow from under the slight cloud, made all of the world a golden glitter, but Hallet did not appear impressed by the picture. Sargent, watching him, wondered a little and emptied the glass, and waited.

"They will drive her out of America and out of all civilization if they don't let her alone," said Hallet at last. "Can't they see that a girl who made the stand she did about that divorce does not care a rap about the reputation of their little family circles? But since she never will agree to a union, the only safe thing for her is legal freedom, and let him marry whom he chooses."

"Even Lulu?"

"No— of course not. That was no doubt her stepmother's scheming, but even she would scarcely dare try it again, now that she knows."

"I'm not so sure," observed Sargent; "the sympathetic feminine mind has queer twists at times. I think her sympathy for Mr. Wayne is no doubt strengthened by the evidence that he has such an impossible wife. I can't imagine a more unwifely lady."

"You don't like her?" stated Hallet, accusingly.

"I did not say so, but you must allow that she does not seem at all amenable to the domestic conventions."

"But she could be, she would be if she ever had a chance, the right chance with the right man," persisted Hallet, loyally. "This unnatural situation and

her anomalous position puts her on the defensive with everyone. That sort of thing would warp the spirit of an angel, and—"

"I could think of one or two other things to compare her to rather than an angel," was Sargent's smiling comment, as Hallet dropped into the chair again and regarded the picture of her on the desk.

"I came in to talk to you about this very subject," he said at last, "and it gave me a bit of a whirl to come face to face with her picture here."

"Not my fault, or hers," said Sargent, amicably. "Nell is the deep-dyed conspirator in the case. Are you another?"

"I imagine that is about what it amounts to," confessed Hallet. "I had her convinced that a divorce was the one wise thing, and you see how it ended. A hint that he might marry the wrong girl made her no longer indifferent, but assertive. She has heretofore always appeared so indifferent that no one can see how she ever came to marry him. She made conditions with Dacy before she came into the family circle that they were not to trouble her with questions. She was only a child—yet most unchildlike."

"Yes," assented Sargent. "Charming as she is to the people she likes, she struck me as the sort of woman who had never had a childhood—not that she is worldly or sophisticated—but there is an impression that she is on guard—that she has always been on guard."

Hallet looked at him sharply.

"You've struck it," he said with conviction. "That is a puzzling element I could never quite define in her, yet always felt."

"Oh, you've felt it, too?"

"Rather! I fancied it was accounted for by her unpleasant situation, but knowing what we do of Wayne, there is no knowing how many different kinds of hell she became acquainted with before any of us saw her; and that's why there must be none of this unhappy family reunion business, and why I want your help."

"*My* help! My dear fellow, if you knew how that lovely lady looks over me and past me and then looks the other way, mostly the other way, you'd realize that this is the wrong shop to come to for influence."

"You mean that she doesn't like you?"

"I confess I'd be afraid to ask her."

"But I can't understand—"

"Thanks; don't try," suggested Sargent. "The fact is, I rather think our loving friends had rather overdone the pleasant task of praising each of us, and we met prepared to pick flaws in each other. She began the game by skim-milk sort of praise for those drawings," and he motioned to the originals of the illustrations, framed, on the wall, "and perhaps I said the wrong thing—result, the lovely lady looks down upon me from a very high throne, or else stilts."

"At least I can assure you it is not stilts," Hallet

hastened to assert. "She is the farthest possible from being stilted; but you know she does know considerable about art, and it may be—"

"Oh, I bear no malice," said Sargent, interrupting the attempt to explain. "She probably thinks I am not the right man for Nell, and puts me on probation before giving her approval; but you see I am not likely to be of much service if it is a matter of influence."

"But I hoped that with the help of Nell—"

"I see. In her letter she does not seem to favor the family reunion."

"I know. But that is all negative. What I want is positive action in the other direction. Monica Wayne must be persuaded to favor a divorce for her own sake. I want to get it for her, but I can't try again to talk her into it."

"I should think you would be just the one person to do it."

"Well, you'll have to think again," said Hallet. "I—can't."

His face flushed, and Sargent felt the color sweep into his own face as he arose and turned towards the cabinet.

"Have another drink," he suggested.

CHAPTER IX

Miss Elinor Mitford, Boothbay Harbor, Maine, to Mrs. Monica Wayne, Dacy's Harbor, Gloucester, Massachusetts.

MONICA DEAR:

You really should have come along. There is an art group here, and quite a sprinkling of highbrows of your sort, the real folks who get down to brass tacks and know all the latest scientific whirls.

And you are alone down there with that booming surf—and Aunt Martha the nearest neighbor!

Lane has neither come nor written, so I don't know where I stand. Aunt Martha is furious, but I could not endure the family circle another minute, and what is the use being engaged if you never see the man?

Dear Cousin Glyndon is still curious—and suddenly devoted to "Cousin Nellie." I have a pair of earrings now to match the bracelet! I have n't told him a thing, but Aunt Martha is quite busy. I don't mean to be a calamity howler, but I do wish you would not live there alone. I am half afraid of a surprise party for you some day in the form of a repentant husband. I don't know how he would blossom out as a penitent, but I had the felicity (?) once of seeing him when filled with mixed drinks, and on pleasure bent, "running amuck," as it were, and he certainly cut a wide swath! Aunt Martha can't quite credit that side of Glyn, because he *has* charming moments, and she only chooses to think of those moments; but I know the other side, and hope

you never will. Do let the work rest and come where the folks are alive!

Nanny wanted to know if she could get that little sewing girl, Hettie, as a maid, but Aunt Martha does not seem able to locate her. She has faded off the map since the death of her grandfather, and Aunt Martha evidently does not think either of them much of a loss to the coast. But if the girl comes back, and you care to give her Nanny's address, it would be appreciated here. Her maid married a husky life-saving roundsman and is the belle of the beach just now.

If you ever wrote letters I would ask if any word comes to the Dacy family concerning Lane; he may be away, but is supposed to be writing himself famous again in Manhattan. You two are equally difficult in different ways — not amenable to discipline in the family circle. Neither of you seem to crave a rattling good time.

You may get a chance to work hard as you like in the next incarnation, so why not take a good, long breathing spell in this? Do pull up anchor and join us. The rest of the children are this minute framing a "round robin" in which to forward the same request. Devotedly,

NELL.

The "round robin," with its circle of friendly names, and several masterpieces in the way of pen-sketched and pen-blotted caricatures, was taken from the envelope, and Monica Wayne smiled at the joyous absurdity of the whole.

Other mail slipped to the sand as she re-read Nell's expressed fear of a surprise party. She sat on the great timber of some ancient wreck and frowned out at the open sea. For a girl of twenty-two, who had

lived a strange, half-barbaric childhood, and the secretive shut-in life of girlhood, the problems were closing in, and she would have to face them as she had faced all things — alone.

She re-read the lines, "But I know the other side and hope you never will," and her smile was bitter with unvoiced memories and, gathering up the other mail impatiently, she walked down to a little boat, laid the letters in and was about to push off, when a step crunched the pebbles back of her and a hand was laid on the gunwale.

"Allow me," said the voice of Sargent beside her.

She shrank from him, and then stood perfectly still, not turning towards him, or looking at him, and the color ebbed from her face, leaving her marble-like.

The man stared at her, amazed that she could be so startled.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" he said, hurriedly, laying his hand on hers. "It never occurred to me that you did not hear me. I waited until you had finished your letter, but feel like a brute to startle you so."

"It is — nothing," she said, moving a step away and leaning against the boat, while the color swept over her throat and cheek, leaving her girlishly lovely under the white Tam-o'-Shanter. "It was stupid of me; I never knew I was nervous before. No, I did not know you were here."

"I probably came on the same train bringing your mail," he observed, picking up one of the fallen letters

from the sand. "I have been out on the water ten days and ran into Gloucester for supplies. I came up for a day to see the folks, but came too late to find Nell."

"She went north last week—and wrote you, I believe."

"I've been out of touch with mail—was writing up some sea scenes and lived out on the water to do it. I will have the pleasure of letters waiting me in Manhattan."

He talked on easily and casually until the trembling of her hands had ceased and she had regained her poise somewhat. He could not but wonder at her absolute fear. She had turned as if to flee at his approach. Her mind was so filled by the other picture conjured up by the letter of Nell that for an instant it was as if the dreaded thing had come back out of the old life to stand beside her.

She took the fallen letters from his hand, but made no attempt at conversation, and had not once lifted her eyes to his. It was not a cold or resentful silence —it was vibrant of the unexpressed, and despite her half-shy silence he could read relief in her manner, even though she had drawn away from the impulsive touch of his hand.

"Mrs. Dacy told me you had sailed around the reef for your mail, and that I might have the good fortune to find you at the pier," he said; "may I also have the good fortune to be of service, and take you back to your sanctuary above the sea?"

"Take me back, you?" she said, looking up at him for the first time, and then laughed a bit, nervously. "It is scarcely worth the time it would take, and Mrs. Dacy would think me a pirate to carry off her special guest."

"Then you don't mean to invite me aboard your craft?" he queried, with the desire to again see the smile in her eyes. She looked absurdly young in the white blouse and natty skirt of many buttons. She was the girl of the picture, but evasive and shrinking rather than the self-confident sailor maid.

"To invite you aboard to escort me home would only amuse your friends," she remarked. "I sail over all these waters alone, day-time or night-time. In fact, I think I will leave the boat and go back to the house. I want an address for Nanny Allen, and it may be that Mrs. Dacy can help me."

There was, of course, no reply to be made to that; he was plainly and absolutely barred out from anything approaching cousinship with this cousin of Nell's. It would have been amusing if—it had been any other woman.

He turned and walked beside her up the path winding between huge boulders. Few words were spoken between them, yet, as before, the silence was not the barrier her words had been.

He looked at her face, half turned away, and smiled.

"Do you remember how startled I was at you that first day when you emerged from the shrubbery just

about here?" he asked. "I wish you could help me discover why you seemed no stranger. Was it your likeness to the drawings, or is it a case of reincarnation?"

"Probably the latter," she suggested, "in which case you should know as much about it as I."

"I probably should, but have a feeling that I don't."

"What an idea!"

"I know so little that my interest in the subject has never abated, while you either know so much that you have no curiosity left, or else the queries so bewildering to me are beneath your attention."

"Probably the latter," she repeated, with a sudden mutinous flash of the eyes he had thought of as shadowed flames. "But I fancied the reincarnation reason for things was a trifle shopworn."

"After that thrust I presume you would scorn to look at the special edition of the little *Twilight* story," he observed, "but I did bring a copy, and there is one new illustration."

"I suppose the polite thing to say is that I would be delighted to see it, and the polite thing in this case chances to be the truth."

"Really?"

"Really. The story is a little gem, as you have had to hear very often. It has all the color of a faithful translation from the Spanish. There is no suggestion of Anglo-Saxon America in it, which is remarkable

for an easterner, who merely passed through the country, absorbing fleeting impressions."

"How did you chance to know the method of work?" he asked, quickly. She turned, mildly surprised, indifferent eyes on him.

"Did not Mr. Gilman make some comment of that sort?" she asked, "or was it Nell? Anyway, you should live in Spain or Mexico; you have the key."

She had grown more at ease as they neared the house, more cordial in tone as their *tête-à-tête* was nearing the end.

Thus he was given at times brief tantalizing glimpses of the friendly spirit which her devotees affirmed was normally her own.

When they reached the house she suggested to Dacy that he walk to the bungalow with her and talk over some improvements she was considering regarding the property. Then after questioning Mrs. Dacy, without effect, concerning the little seamstress, she remembered the special edition of *The Woman of the Twilight* and graciously signified to Mr. Sargent that she would be pleased to see it!

Without comment he took from the table the little volume in white, and gray, and silver, and opened it at the frontispiece of the shadow ship sailing out into the mists of the unknown.

"How — Japanese!" she remarked after a careful inspection, and holding it at arm's length. "It is beautifully reproduced. What does it mean?"

Receiving no reply, she glanced up to see him regarding her with a puzzled frown. It seemed incomprehensible to him that, with her rather unusual acquirements, she should fail utterly to grasp a thought if sentiment entered into it, even in an art form.

"I have evidently said the wrong thing," she observed with a rueful smile, "but, after all, what does any ship mean until one knows the cargo aboard? This one goes out into the unknown and gives one the feeling that the end of the trail is far away."

A little later she waved a light adieu to the others and Dacy walked with her over to the bungalow and conferred on the very trifling changes she had suggested. After a cup of tea he left and promised to send a fisherman back with her boat; a thing he was always eager to do rather than see her sail it herself through the dangerous waters and around sunken reefs.

He was seconded heartily in this by Maum Rosa, who, born and reared inland, never looked but with dread on the tumultuous sea and the wreckage in the coves, telling their mute tale of tragedies.

When her boat rounded the reef an hour later, Monica Wayne, seeing it, smiled at herself and at the loss of the glorious sail she had counted upon that perfect day—the sail she had given up rather than bring back with her the guest who had so pointedly asked an invitation.

Apparently she was getting at least some amusement

from the puzzled scrutiny of the author of *Twilight.* It never yet had dawned upon him that she had stood within a few feet of him in the old plaza of San Juan while her rage and triumph had been voiced in no uncertain words. He had used that episode in his story of the mission pueblo, but had given the ride and the action to his *Woman of the Twilight,* who rode against time, and swam the river, to reach her lover. And after using the episode he had half forgotten that the actual rider had been the evil-tempered, thin-faced child who taunted the Mexican by slurs against his family circle.

Yet continually she was aware that when she spoke to others his ears were open to her voice, and at times a quick turn of his head, a more direct glance of the eye, would meet her, as if suddenly he had almost discerned the link connecting her with some forgotten life — almost, but never quite.

At first when she came to the East, to the place of her mother's people, the pain and some of the horror of the old life was too new, too keen, to speak of. As she grew older and met at every turn the different customs and different standards, she became more and more loath to voice remembrance of that peculiar household where her dark cousins still held sway, and where her one woman friend had been the devotee of the shrine, and — she knew now — the central figure in Sargent's story.

She had not as a girl given a thought to the fact

that Doña Carmelita was, in a way, a member of the family — what would have become of them all if she had not been? But Sargent's book had been a revelation to her of the life hidden from her younger years. She wondered as to whether it had been literally a true story he had written, or if he had idealized and added to the romance or the tragedy. Yet, much as she appreciated his sympathy and his grasp of the life there, she dared not put forward a single query lest it lift the thin veil and awaken memory.

Also, with her own growing fame, it was scarcely the time to acknowledge, after six silent years, that she had been a part of the life of Sargent's Mexican village. And to the people of the East, who knew that she had lived at times among the Mexicans, it never occurred that the most Mexican village in which she had lived as a child had been within the California state line.

She was thinking of this as she went slowly down to the shore to see that the boat was made secure, and at times she cast a half regretful glance at the sky and the far, open water; it was a glorious day for a sail; she felt cheated.

And then, still undecided, she passed between great boulders, shutting out sea and sail, and emerged at the shore as the boat ran into the little cove, and the canvas hung limp for a moment, hiding the sailor until she was quite close, but she halted in her tracks as the man sprang ashore.

"Caught!" he remarked, ruefully. "I assure you I did not mean to intrude on your Adamless Eden beyond guiding your boat to your door."

"It is very kind of you, but Uncle Dacy should not—"

"He did n't, I assure you, he did n't," said Sargent, hastily. "He did your bidding; got a handy man to do it, and—I bought him off! The little coves of the coast are a temptation, and I was really spoiling for this sort of a sail—just skimming the waves without a time limit, or anyone expecting me at any point. I felt like a pirate stealing your boat, but since I struck no sunken reefs—"

"You might have," and her voice held a warning. "It is dangerous to make a first trip without a sailor who knows the coast."

"But you sail alone!"

"I had for a teacher an old sailor who knew every curve of the shore."

"No teacher loomed on the horizon for me," he said, smiling, "and Mr. Dacy warned me against your sort of a sailor."

"He was above reproach, when sober," she protested, warmly, "but he was pretty old and had some accident over on Squaw River, and never got over it. I was trying to locate his granddaughter this morning, but she has drifted to some other port, out of reach. Aunt Dacy has her prejudices, but poor old Craig

could actually feel his way in the dark around these reefs, sober or not!"

"And you doubt me acquiring such seamanship?"

"I doubt if it would be worth your while to attempt it—here," she said, demurely, and then as she noted his quick, direct gaze she added, "It is a most treacherous coast, Mr. Sargent."

"It does not look it, and—it gives frank warning," he replied. "The reefs are plainly visible."

"Perhaps not all," she said. "Don't fancy this smooth bay is typical. There is neither wind nor sea enough to show the white form over the sunken reefs. It was your lucky day that you were not made victim."

"I see you mean to frighen me from making this harbor again," he observed. She smiled, not unkindly, but made no reply, and together for the second time that day they walked together up from the water's edge to the cliff above the sea.

"Will you come in?" she asked, politely, but he smiled, and looked down at her, and shook his head.

"Thanks, no," and slight as was the relief in her face, he saw it. "I am really a very bold, very persistent member of the family," he continued, "for I wanted to give you that special copy of *Twilight* and plucked up courage after you left to bring it over. Will you accept it, even though I can't tell you the cargo or port of the shadow ship?"

Taking it from his pocket he held it out to her, and,

after a scarcely perceptible hesitation, she took it gravely, but did not lift her eyes to his.

"It is exquisite. I scarcely know how to thank you," she said, her voice very even and very low.

"I will like to think of my Mexican story in the one Mexican room on the shore," and then he looked at her in silence a moment, and his voice was almost as low and guarded as her own as he said, "No thanks are due me, but — if I only could be sure I have not spoiled your joy in your boat, or your own little cove —"

He half extended his hand, but she held the book in both hers and looked up at him.

"Be sure," she said in grave courtesy, and with one long look at her, he lifted his hat and turned away.

"Adios, Señor!" she said, softly, and walked slowly up the path under the old trees. She halted at the steps and looked after him as he swung around at the turn of the high, wild hedge and, looking back, lifted his hat.

She made no answering gesture, but stood with the book clasped in her hands. The refrain of an old Spanish song came to her, and she hummed it as she turned away.

"Adios! adios! por siempre — adios!"

She had felt that sooner or later they would be alone with each other and that it would be in a way a test for both. She scarcely dared think of how strangely he must regard her conservative, almost repelling, man-

ner. The book in her hand showed at least that he was not resentful; in fact, he was big and generous, and all things desirable, even though he must think her a narrow prig, with not one spontaneous, generous instinct.

Well, she told herself, she was glad it was settled and done with, and before long she would be back in the Manhattan studio, and away from the family circle atmosphere, where every cousin's sweetheart had the entrée to one's own little harbor.

But she sang little snatches of Spanish songs as she worked that day, and ever the recurring refrain—

"Adios! adios! por siempre—adios!"

CHAPTER X

IN the early autumn, Hamilton Dacy, instructed, warned, and encouraged by his wife, made his first call at the new studio over which Monica Wayne was enthusiastic. The light was all it should be, and the gray, silvery walls with touches of black in the paneling gave it a Japanese effect restful to the eye, and offering admirable setting for the studies in color scattered about.

He had meant to see Monica early if possible, and alone, and was rather dismayed at the vision of Mrs. Smythe-Orville, attended by Gilman, preceding him into the foyer.

"You also coming to look at the new picture?" asked Gilman, as the door was opened by Maum Rosa, who smiled cordially at Mr. Dacy.

"Howdy, Rosa. No, I came to have a talk with the painter of it—did not know there was any special picture on view."

"Yes," purred Mrs. Smythe-Orville, looking arch and wise, "Mrs. Dacy told me. Since your family artist allows no one else to be legal mistress of Castlemar, your protegée is offered the position for herself! Yours is the task to discover whether it is to be, or

not to be, husband or no husband, divorce or reconciliation."

"We have only been back a few days," observed Dacy, non-committally. "Mrs. Dacy evidently forgot this was a show day of any sort."

"No, sir, 'taint exactly a show day," volunteered Rosa, "only Miss Nell was to meet friends here. Miss Monica allowed to be back, but she has been detained. The new picture is in the music room, if you all will step in and wait a bit."

McLane Sargent entered and smiled at Dacy, who, truth to tell, did not look glad to see him.

"Thanks, Rosa, I'll wait here," he said, settling himself in a comfortable chair and eyeing Sargent, who was greeting Mrs. Smythe-Orville.

"I'll wait, too," observed Sargent, "unless I am intruding on a special invitation affair," and he glanced about questioningly.

"Oh, not at all," volunteered Mrs. Smythe-Orville. "I was to meet Mrs. Dacy a little later in the mission rooms in this building. Mr. Gilman was good enough to escort me. Mr. Dacy is here, I fancy, in the happy rôle of peacemaker, while you are the only one unaccounted for!"

There was a touch of sly malice in her tone, while her smile was one that put Sargent on guard in a way new and not pleasant.

He seated himself leisurely and smiled back at her.

"I followed my friend Dacy," he said, amiably. "I

usually have to follow someone to gain admittance to this charming interior — which does not prevent me from coming if I have a vestige of an excuse."

"So — I've — observed," and the long, blue eyes regarded him through narrowed lids.

"So I've noticed," he retorted, lightly.

"Well, since you are to marry into her husband's family you are probably within the welcome circle," decided Gilman, generously; but Sargent had crossed the room and was examining a small-framed water color of a typical southern cottage of the better sort.

"That's a charming thing," he observed; "live oaks draped with Spanish moss and a dwelling absolutely covered with roses. Is it a real place?" he asked, turning to Mr. Dacy, who nodded his head with a baleful glance at the color study and then at Sargent.

"It's Monica's cottage down South — all that's left of her mother's estate. I never saw it, but know it is of little value — run to seed and not big enough to swing a cat in."

"Why should she want to swing cats in it?" asked Gilman, the latter squinting at the picture appreciatively. "I only hope the southern place you are trying to win for me is half as picturesque."

"Picturesque!" retorted Mr. Dacy. "It is a thousand acres and a mansion of twenty rooms!"

"Have you never seen it?" queried Mrs. Smythe-Orville, wonderingly, and her blues eyes opened with interest at this description of the estate.

"Never. My branch of the family were aliens of the North and never got a look-in after sixty-one. But if I win the suit we will have a monster housewarming down there. So consider yourselves all bespoken for it."

"How nice," she murmured. "I wonder if we dare look at the new picture without being properly introduced to it?"

"It is sure to be worth trying for," he agreed, and they moved towards the music room, but the lady halted at the entrance to admire some embroidered hangings from Yucatan. Sargent, with his hands in his pockets, remained before the little picture, regarding it curiously. Some houses convey an atmosphere of their own, and this one had a charm and even a sort of kinship with its owner — alluring beauty half hidden in the gray-green of festooned mosses. It was a veil, suggesting unseen beauties beyond.

"And this is her home?" he said at last.

The slight query in the tone gave Mr. Dacy the chance he needed to vent his impatience at the existing state of affairs.

"It's her house; she never had a home," he stated, irritably. "Carted west in her babyhood by a father who was crazy over archæology. He died, and Wayne was on hand to comfort and play protector — played the devil doing it, too! This is as much of a home as she will ever have unless she listens to reason and compromises. What's the matter with you? She

has n't a dollar except what she earns. Do you want to see her next door to beggary all her life?"

"But her earnings will steadily grow greater, and—Hallet has spoken to you. He is in earnest. Even to marry him would be better than—"

"Better! Of course, it would be better; but she is as recklessly improvident as her father before her; sinking good, hard dollars in Mexican antiques. Hallet? no, she will never do so sensible a thing as to marry him, any more than she would marry me, or you!"

Sargent turned away and caught the glance of Mrs. Smythe-Orville, who loitered at the alcove.

"I knew they were quarreling about her," she said, in a low tone, to Gilman, who slipped his hand through her arm.

"Well, as they don't ask our advice we can view the picture," he observed. "It will give them time to have the row over before the hostess arrives."

Sargent watched them disappear, and then turned to the other man.

"Dacy, you are not going to allow yourself to be influenced by the family and try to argue her into considering that damned business, are you?" he demanded, as the others sat silent.

"Which do you consider damnable?" he asked at last, "the divorce or the reconciliation?"

"The latter, of course. See here, Dacy, you can't encourage it; you must not! I know your wife advo-

cates it; she has some good orthodox ideas concerning the duty of a wife—oh, I heard her discuss it with Nell—and it was laughable, laughable when you consider the man. Your wife has no idea of his real life, but men know. You know, and I know, and if she was a sister of mine I would rather see her dead than go back to him."

Mr. Dacy looked more than a little perturbed, and the deep wrinkle between his brows changed his usually good-natured face. He tapped the arm of the chair with his finger tips as if telegraphing a message for help in a dilemma.

"You appear greatly interested," he observed.

"I am," returned Sargent, briefly.

"Well, considering your slight knowledge of the affair, I can't see—but I suppose you are working for Hallet?"

"Hallet's a good fellow," said Sargent, "and I can't see, Dacy, how you can work against the divorce."

"But the devil of it is she has refused the thought of divorce. It's an awful affair to have in the family," he continued, miserably, "but Monica makes it worse by insisting he shall marry no one but that companion of his. Of course, that is impossible. He wants to get back into society, and she would never be received."

"Though she is the better of the two!"

"Well, one of them had to be the better, and no one could easily be worse than Wayne," observed Dacy, somberly.

The voice of Mrs. Wayne came to them speaking to someone in the hall, and the eyes of the two men met with a sort of shock. It was a moment for decision and they would no longer be alone for quiet discussion. Monica Wayne was in the music room greeting the others, and already they were all approaching the studio.

"Give it up, won't you?" asked Sargent, earnestly. "Give it up. Dacy, you can't do it!"

"Are you scolding Uncle Dacy?" asked Monica from the doorway, and she smiled as she patted Dacy's shoulder protectingly. "Don't you allow him! I have observed," she added, with a glance of mischief at Sargent, "that he is a very self-willed, dominating person, unless one is rigidly severe with him."

"Oh, Madam Monica, I protest!"

"Yes, you are," she insisted, "and the entire family must unite in some method of discipline for the new member, else the flattering public may spoil him." She was smiling as she looked at him over her shoulder, "And since to marry Nell will make you a cousin of mine—"

"So you have kindly reminded me before," he observed in the same light tone. "Is it to include me in the family, or keep me at a distance?"

She was removing a white cobweb veil from her hat and her face was turned away, but the others laughed, and Mrs. Smythe-Orville looked archly at Sargent.

"The latter, of course," she said, with mock severity. "Mrs. Wayne would n't offer to be even a sister to a man."

"I should hope not," volunteered Gilman. "Sisters we have by the dozen, but a cousin's a different thing!"

"I am sure this cousin will be different," ventured Sargent; but Mrs. Wayne smiled without looking at him, and sat on the arm of Dacy's chair.

"I 'm not at all sure of that," she remarked, and then patted Dacy's bald head. "What was he doing to you, you poor dear?"

"Oh, giving a lawyer legal advice," grumbled Dacy. "Offering me some pretty ideas from his collection."

"Are they to be accepted?" asked Sargent, crisply, and the other jerked himself out of the chair like an irritable boy, and reached for his hat.

"I suppose so, I suppose so. Confound the business! Monica, I 'm going."

Monica Wayne, amazed, looked from Dacy to Sargent, and then back to Dacy, who halted in the door and said "Good Lord!" very fervently.

His wife was coming along the hall and the poor man felt that he was between the devil and the very deep sea.

"It 's no use, Martha; the case is off the docket so far as I am concerned. I 'm going. You air your own arguments!"

McLane Sargent grasped his hand heartily, but he

fairly broke away, while Mrs. Dacy halted in the door, staring after him with decided disapproval.

"Well, of all the—"

"I'll not be home to dinner, Martha," came back her husband's voice as he reached the elevator.

"I'm not surprised at that decision," remarked Mrs. Dacy as she came slowly in, nodded to the others and touched Monica's cheek with a little peck of a kiss. "What was he saying to you, Monica?"

"Not anything."

"What?"

Monica, perplexed, shook her head but looked at Sargent, who, after one quick glance at her, turned to Mrs. Dacy and drew forward a chair, into which she sank.

Mrs. Smythe-Orville smiled between half-closed lids.

"I have an impression that Mr. Sargent threatened him with instant annihilation if he even made an attempt to speak to her," she observed. "Modern chivalry, eager to protect the lady in the case from every man except—"

She halted at a look from Sargent and made a little amused gesture of fear, smiling archly at Gilman as she did so.

Sargent gave her no further heed but turned to Mrs. Dacy.

"It is quite true that I did advise Mr. Dacy concern-

ing a family matter and—he has acted on the advice. As you and I," he added, smilingly, "are to meet again soon we will have an opportunity to talk it over. I trust I have not brought discord within your beautiful walls," and he bowed to Monica Wayne, who bent her head slightly in acknowledgment but made no reply. She still stood where Dacy left her, perplexed and curious.

"This is all very interesting," she said, with a little shrug. "They come in here, pow-wow at each other, and vanish. I seem to be the only one who does not comprehend a word of it."

Mrs. Dacy untied her bonnet strings and looked as if she would like to unfasten a collar for greater breath to express her exasperation.

"I sent Hamilton Dacy here with a family letter—you need n't go, Fannie—it 's not so confidential," she added as Gilman ostentatiously was about to lead Mrs. Smythe-Orville to the music room.

"The letter was from Italy," she continued, and put up a hand in protest as Monica turned away wearily. "It contained a really touching plea, my dear, and—a legal proposition. Your own establishment, dear. Your own in every way, and an allowance that is princely. Someone has told him you have developed into quite a beauty and he was *so* interested to hear it; it really seems as if he only remembers you as a sort of ugly duckling. Well, the letter was charming—Glyndon always did express himself admirably—and

McLane Sargent has interfered in some way and kept Hamilton from reading it to you."

Monica Wayne looked at her incredulously.

"Mr. Sargent interfered?"

"You heard him. I never knew a clever man could be so stupid. It would be worth his while to be nice to Glyndon. He and Elinor are full cousins, and his wedding present would be worth while!"

Maum Rosa had just opened the door for Miss Mitford and Tony Allen, but no one noticed their entrance until the young lady heaved a ponderous sigh, at which her aunt turned with a start and viewed her with displeasure.

"Wedding presents," breathed the bride-elect, "haunting thought."

"Nonsense!" said her aunt, sharply. "If no one gave you any you would be furious."

"No doubt you're right," agreed the girl, removing her hat and fluffing her fair hair. "How stunning you look in that garnet and white, Monica! Waiting for me?"

"No, I was detained downtown; only just got in," returned Mrs. Wayne, absently folding the veil. "Pardon me; I will be back directly."

Mrs. Dacy watched her as she went thoughtfully out and across the music room to her dressing room, where Maum Rosa waited for her. The fact that Monica had made no retort concerning Glyndon was encouraging, and Glyndon's aunt settled back in her chair

complacently. It would be a victory to bring success out of Hamilton's failure!

"Monica seemed really impressed by what I revealed to her," she said aside to Mrs. Smythe-Orville. "Elinor, I thought Lulu was with you and Tony."

Miss Mitford, who was viewing her own unfinished portrait from various angles, smiled at the obvious suggestion that even Lulu as a chaperone might assist the proprieties.

"She was with us until we met Joe," was the serene reply, at which Mrs. Smythe-Orville sighed impatiently.

"That boy again! Not but what he is a dear boy, of course," she added, "and I suppose it is regarded as all right over here, but on the other side I would not dream of allowing her to walk alone with a young man!"

"They don't dream about it here, dear lady," said Tony Allen, who was adjusting the easel for the portrait. "They just saunter along, wide awake!"

"That's it," retorted Gilman; "youth today has no illusions. Logic is cultivated and Romance hides her head!"

"I really can't see," observed Mrs. Dacy as she arose to look at the picture, "why you persist in seeking romance when you are so certain it can't be found."

"All the fault of the — ah — scientist who examined this," announced Tony, extending his hand in mock

blessing above Gilman's head. "He really got you into trouble, Gilman — spoiled a good reporter. You have never done a day's work since."

"What," demanded Gilman, with a tragic scowl, "not work! I don't have to chase the almighty dollar now, but what about my notes — twelve books? Little you, frivolous idler, know."

"He doesn't know a thing about it, Gillie," said Miss Mitford, soothingly. "But why don't you select a theme to string all those good things on? Condense your twelve books into one, and give the public a treat?"

"Great idea," agreed Gilman, beaming under her interest. "I've thought of it. I've studied thoroughly for three months the construction of the drama, with that very end in view."

"All that time?" asked Tony, but Gilman ignored the flippant, and directed his discourse to the lady.

"I am only delayed now by one obstacle, apparently a trifle, yet still an obstacle. Got all the good things in these little books, and am at present looking for a character good enough to say them all."

"Oh, my genius!" grinned Tony. "We'll all be so proud to know you — some day!"

"Don't mind him, Gillie."

"N — there are some of us who don't mean to wait until some day," said Mrs. Smythe-Orville, sweetly, and Gilman promptly seated himself beside her, and continued to beam under appreciative eyes.

"My prophetic soul assures me you would prove adorable — even as a mother-in-law," he confided to her, and Tony sat up very straight and stared, and then followed Nell into the music room.

"For the love of Kelly! which of the two is he the lottery ticket for? I thought it was herself."

"So it is, unless there is higher game in sight," answered the girl, bluntly. "She means to win Gillie, and his money, somehow — you'll see. Of course, if Monica gets a divorce she still has hopes of Glyndon — though she pretends she is horribly shocked by his duplicity — Fannie Smith shocked," and she smiled at the idea. "She would hand Lulu over to either of those men, and take the other herself if it could be managed."

"But Gilman —"

"Is a goose, a dear goose. Fannie is already intimating that Lulu, dear child, thinks him ideal. Lulu doesn't, but Lulu has learned not to say so. She is more than afraid of being taken back to Europe, and Gillie would be better than that. Oh, there is a lot going on that you don't see."

"Naturally, when looking at you."

"Well! that's the limit for today," said the young lady, pettishly, crashing her fingers into the piano keys and starting a rattling military quickstep. "When looking at *me* there's nothing visible to the naked eye."

"Oh, see here," began Tony, but she turned her

head defiantly and gave all her attention to the kettledrum part of the orchestration.

"Can't see—my own sight is bad," she stated at last.

"But I didn't mean—"

"Oh, didn't you? You've been actually rude all morning."

"Why, Nell!—"

"Yes, you have, too. You joked and made game of wedding presents, and—and had no regard for my feelings at all."

"Nell, I never—"

"Didn't you suggest a 'crazy room' for the duplicates and undesirable? and didn't you—"

"Oh, damn!" growled Tony, in utter exasperation. "I'm tired of this and shall leave town tomorrow!"

"Elinor," said Mrs. Dacy, as the two emerged from the music room after a final crash on the keys. "I should think you get quarreling enough in your disagreements with McLane Sargent—for an engaged couple!" and her expression suggested that words failed. The other two smiled at each other. Nell caught them at it and was even more furious. She flounced back into the music room with a scornful glance at Tony, but, for once, it did not reduce him to humility as usual. He walked over to the piano and talked to her back when she whirled on the piano stool.

"I mean it," he said, quietly. "You've had time enough to decide. I'll go tomorrow. You can come

with me if you will, but I shan't ask you. You know where you belong. You decide."

Then he walked from the alcove to Mrs. Dacy.

"I'm taking a run out of town, and she will only have a luckier man to quarrel with," he said. "Good-by, I'll not wait for Mrs. Wayne; she'll forgive me."

He nodded to the other two and in three strides was out of the door. Miss Mitford shrugged her shoulders and seated herself petulantly in the model chair.

"It's horrible to be afflicted by a temper like Tony's," she remarked. No one made any comment, which she regarded as impolite.

"Where is that lady of the paint brushes?" she demanded at last. "I came to look pretty for my picture."

Gilman had sauntered to the window, looking down into the street, and chuckled as the strains of a hand organ came up to him.

"There are your lost cherubs," he remarked, and Mrs. Smythe-Orville uttered a little cry of protest as she glanced the way he pointed.

"Horrors! Lulu and that boy following a hand organ."

"But they are only listening with the children on the sidewalk," said Gilman, soothingly. He thought it looked very childlike and unsophisticated, and was making a note in the little red book.

But Mrs. Smythe-Orville, failing in her efforts to

attract their attention, started with determination for the hall.

"They are quite, quite capable of dancing with the children on the sidewalk," she said, complainingly, and Gilman picked up his hat.

"I shall follow, to — to protect them," he ventured, lamely. "She does n't like independence for women."

"Not for other women!" retorted Miss Mitford, whose temper was not inclined to charity, and who expected a lecture from her aunt the minute they were alone.

But whatever the intentions of the lady might have been, they were interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Wayne, who had changed her street dress to a working robe of white, over which was thrown a long gown or apron of scarlet; a sort of elaboration of the Yucatan native dress in that it was of one piece of thin material and enveloped her, hanging in straight sculpturesque lines to her feet, and fastened under the arms by a lacing of cord.

She carried a prepared palette and brushes and glanced around, noting the absence of the others, but made no comment.

"Well, you must have gone into a trance," remarked Nell, "but you have come out of it looking lovely. The rest have all faded away."

"Yes, I was talking to Tony in the dining room. He came back to say good-by."

"Oh, indeed. Say, Monica, that red work apron or

gown, or whatever you call it, is great. I wonder if I could not have an opera cloak on those lines, fastened on the shoulder?"

"Probably, but it would never be popular with dressmakers — too simple."

Mrs. Dacy regarded her approvingly as she looked up from a little list she was making of items to be attended to — that is, as approvingly as she could possibly look on a woman of the Wayne family in a working garb. She was already making mentally little social plans for the day when the Glyndon Waynes would entertain as a woman of the name should.

She decided to use her influence against the continuance of this chummy studio atmosphere apparently favored by Monica, or at least condoned by her. It was all very well for the relatives, but Monica did not apparently mind Tony or Gilman dropping in any free hour, and if the door was closed to one it was closed to all.

But Glyndon, of course, would not allow his wife to retain a separate studio where such freedom could be given — that would be one comforting thought. It had been quite a task for the family, that is for Mrs. Dacy, to keep up the pretense that Mrs. Wayne was merely an enthusiast on all ecclesiastical art work, and was devoting her days to it irrespective of the prices to be earned; in fact, more than one acquaintance was left under the impression that the long months spent

by Monica in Spain or in Old Mexico were actually lived somewhere on the continent with her husband.

Mrs. Dacy had a way of saying, "I really don't know where they are just now. Monica sent Elinor a pretty scarf from Spain lately, but there are so many points of interest to be seen and not much time for letters."

Which, of course, was all perfectly true, and bold would be the one who could ask bluntly, "But are they living together?"

So she had a complacent feeling as she watched Monica silently posing Nell, nodding approval and touching the canvas with strokes, now sure, now doubtful, but ever with a thoughtful, absorbed look, not conducive to conversation—and Miss Mitford was a bit thoughtful herself.

Mrs. Dacy stood the silence until she had penciled the last little item, and then, folding her tablets, fastened her bonnet strings preparatory to leaving. She was a bit ostentatious in her endeavor to attract the attention of Monica, but without avail. It was the artist now, and not a hostess, who had eyes only for the model and the canvas.

"Well, Monica?" said Mrs. Dacy at last.

"Well?" but she did not look up from her work.

"What do you mean to do?" queried the other, with as mild a mien as an irritated lady could assume.

"I mean to keep on at this portrait if fortune favors me."

"What do you mean to do concerning Glyndon's letter?"

"That is about as tiresome a subject as you could carry around with you." The smile of Monica was rather weary and there was a rebellious look in the deep eyes. "I have no moments left to think of your nephew, Aunt Dacy. He made his choice years ago, and I am happy to abide by it."

"How can you be so relentless? And if he is truly repentant for leaving—"

"For leaving?" and Monica turned on her with a strange look. "Have you ever had the fancy that I held the slightest feeling of resentment for that? Well, I'll probably shatter a fond illusion, but I danced for joy the day he went away. I'd rather live my life with a Digger Indian!"

"Monica!"

"It's for marrying me I can't forgive him."

"Can't forgive a man for falling in love with you?" asked Nell.

"*Love!*" repeated the other, but there was more disgust than sentiment in her tone.

"Monica, you'll be unhappy," decided the girl, with frowning owl-like wisdom. "You expect too much of humanity."

"That is true," agreed Mrs. Dacy, glad of this unlooked for assistance. "All men have to be forgiven some sins."

"And all women are ready to forgive them—sins

against *other* women," she observed, with a smile of contempt.

"But, my dear child," said Mrs. Dacy, solemnly, "if you never forgive, how can you possibly hope for forgiveness?"

"Well, since you make it a personal question," retorted Monica, desperately, "I do not!"

"Monica!" and Nell forgot her pose.

"Not hope for forgiveness of sins!" and the voice of Mrs. Dacy was most grave. Monica saw the best light of the day going while they decided her heterodoxy.

"I do not," she stated, wearily. "Nell, do get back into position; also I never expect to be too much of a coward to assume the responsibility of my own acts. If I do an injustice to—to John Jones—I'll go squarely and make amends if I can, or to Mrs. Jones and the little Joneses in case I've slaughtered Johnny! That's my idea of atonement instead of asking forgiveness of some unseen lawmaker. My sins will have to rest on my own head;" and then, turning to Mrs. Dacy, she added, mischievously, "I shan't even lay the blame of them on your dear, long-cherished, overworked—devil!"

She dropped her voice in the mockery of fear as she whispered the final word, and laughed at the horror in Mrs. Dacy's face.

"Monica!" cried that extremely shocked lady. "I am confident that if any judge on the bench heard

those sentiments of yours, Glyndon Wayne would be granted a divorce without question. You would be considered a wicked woman. I am positively afraid to think of your future life."

"It's provided for," said Monica, with a certain impish delight. "Is it not written that the incredulous wife may be saved by the faith of the husband? Well, in that case, I am quite secure so long as I object to a divorce, for my husband is quite orthodox, a perfect Solomon in his general tendencies—"

She ceased speaking and laughed as Mrs. Dacy gathered up her shocked dignity and walked out of the room. Nell looked at Monica with a certain astonishment; not so much at the words as at her manner. She had never before seen her in this attitude of reckless mischief crossed by somber defiance against popular opinion, and she wondered if this was what Glyn meant when he mentioned her in his letter as a "scrawny, evil-tempered young imp"? Nell had never seen any evidence of her evil temper, but she could imagine any sort of temper back of the gay insolence by which Mrs. Dacy had been sent shocked and protesting from the room.

"You are smashing Aunt Martha's dearest hopes to smithereens," she observed.

"If so she will probably not trouble me again concerning her pet nephew, and we may get a bit of work done. This has been the most awful day! Makes one wonder what planets are whirling the wrong way

for this little group of people; also it decides me I can't allow the open-door more than once in three months."

"Oh, well, it could n't be as bad as this again," said Nell, consolingly. "You see everyone is coming back to town at once and, of course, wants to see you, and this word from Glyn has stirred them all up more or less. He is the moneyed one of the family now — and listen, Monica, if you won't make up with him, why not apply for the divorce and let him go? That little fancy for Lulu was only a flash in the pan, and I guess Fannie lit the fire and did all the blowing. I know by Glyn's letters the fire is dead and the fancy gone. Don't let yourself be tied to him on account of anyone. Let the other women look after themselves — you are not your sisters' keeper."

"No," agreed Monica, with a touch of bitterness, "no one seems to be."

"Oh, don't get deadly serious over it, or you 'll land in the suffragette ranks, and all life will be one grand, sweet row," warned Nell. "Fannie is earnestly considering it just now with a view to the social ladder, and if she can only land money enough she will go up quite a few rungs — now what 's this?"

It was Mr. Dacy, leading Lulu, who looked like a caught truant, yet smiled at her captor.

"Another law case to settle," he announced, pointing to her as to a terrible example. "Insubordination! Threatens she will elope with the first man who asks

her unless she is allowed to follow organ-grinders and generally misbehave."

"Why, Lulu!" But the chiding of Monica Wayne was so kindly, and her smile so fond, that Lulu found all the encouragement she needed to state her case.

"It was n't the organ grinder; it was Joe she was hitting at," she burst out, wrathfully. "If Joe had as much money as she thinks Mr. Gilman is going to have, there would n't be such a row about it. I *will* run off and marry him, you 'll see!"

Monica and Nell tried to look grave at this avowal, but failed. In the midst of their merriment Mr. Dacy held up his finger warningly.

"You know what your mama threatened."

"What was threatened?" asked Monica.

"Oh, mama tried to scare me by saying the law would allow her to put a man in jail if he eloped with me before I was of age. Could she?"

"If he married you, yes. That would be 'kidnapping a minor' by the law."

"Even if I wanted to go?" demanded Lulu, sulkily. But Dacy shook his head, smiling at her teasingly.

"The wishes of a minor would not be considered. You could not marry legally, any more than you could dispose of property legally, until you are of age."

"I have no property now," said Lulu, with a slight grimace; and they all knew that she might have had if her father's trust in his pretty new wife had not been

so absolute. The trips abroad had eaten up the very modest competence.

"Well," said Mr. Dacy, not inclined to linger over this subject, "we will say then your doll, or a ring from your finger."

"Why, I haven't had a doll for a whole year!" burst out Lulu, rather aggrieved that he could not perceive the doll days were passed. "Joe in jail if he marries me! But mama will marry me to one of her pets if I don't elope, you'll see!" Then a brilliant idea suggested itself, and she flashed it on the surprised lawyer.

"Suppose, suppose I ran away with, with someone, and he refused to marry me until I was of age, then what?"

Mr. Dacy looked uncomfortable, and Nell giggled at his embarrassment.

"Well," demanded the terrible child, "would that be 'kidnaping a minor by the law'?"

"N—no," replied Mr. Dacy, wishing himself well out of it; "it would not be exactly kidnaping."

"Oh, I suppose that would be murder and sudden death," said Lulu, wrathfully. "Well, I hope there is no particular penalty against me dying an old maid."

Nell laughed heartily, as she flounced out of the studio, but Monica looked at Mr. Dacy.

"Why did you not answer her question, Uncle Dacy?"

"How could I? The law varies in different states.

Until a comparatively recent date the New York law held that if there was no marriage there was no criminal case against the man. He would not be the one held responsible. The same law holds in thirty-six states today. It is not a thing you can easily explain to a child."

Nell forgot her pose, and Monica forgot her painting as she stared at him.

"Do you mean that in any of our states today the law imposes a penalty if a man *marries* a girl under age without consent of guardian, but protects that same man and throws the blame on her if he wins her away under any pretense, any promise, and does *not* marry her?"

"Yes," agreed Mr. Dacy, uncomfortably. "If she is over ten, or twelve, or sixteen, and goes of her own will. The age limit varies in different states."

"But this seems so incredible!" she persisted. "A child who could not legally dispose of her own doll or a ring from her finger! An American law that withdraws protection from a girl years before it acknowledges her as mentally capable of protecting her own interests! Then it is not childhood and womanhood the law is meant to protect, but property and—the men who make such laws!"

"But Monica—"

"Oh, Uncle Dacy," she interrupted, "you have no daughters. Evidently none of the statesmen who framed those laws had daughters, or sisters, either!"

"Monica, you don't understand! The average woman has no idea of the reasons, the technicalities, the—"

"The average woman does not know such laws exist. If she did she would be justified in contempt for every court in the land where girlhood was not protected. Oh, their wise laws, the laws to protect the criminal—the laws it is virtue in a man to break!"

"Good Lord, Monica!" burst out the harassed gentleman. "All this sounds as if you had turned into a suffragette over night!"

"I have no time for politics, and a bit of driftwood like me can't always anchor long enough to vote," she replied, "but this revelation has shocked me into wonder that women do not take up that issue and carry it on their banners in every state where such laws exist."

"I guess it's just as well you keep out of their ranks," he observed, mopping his brow. "You'd be dynamite let loose among the doves. A good day to you! This is my last call until tomorrow," and, shaking his head, he passed into the hall and congratulated himself on at least one piece of good luck—as he was going down in the elevator he passed Mrs. Dacy in another one going up!

He did not believe his wife had ever heard of the law under discussion, and it was just as well. He thanked his lucky stars that she did not interest herself in law. Monica was quite enough to contend with—she was prone to unexpected and most erratic opinions.

It was very disconcerting. She did not seem to have the regard she should for any of the established rules. He presumed it was because of her youth having been lived in those lawless Spanish-American districts — a very awkward addition to a New England family! Much as he liked Monica, he was not always comfortable with her; her mental attitude towards many things was, to put it mildly, peculiar. That decision of hers about the divorce was a case in point. He fully agreed with his wife that it would be the crowning scandal to have Glyndon Wayne marry the woman he went abroad with.

At times Dacy considered that the family had almost a grievance against Sargent for that peculiar Mexican story. If it had not been written, he wondered if Monica would have been aroused to take that attitude about the woman in the case. In several ways she was becoming difficult to understand. She was not quite the care-free comrade she had been only a summer ago. After all her work on that bungalow he noticed that she had grown restless, and he would not be at all surprised if it was put on the market before another year went by. He wished with all his heart she would do the sensible thing any other woman would do — accept Wayne's settlement and live rationally in the same house with him for the sake of appearances. Her attitude was absurd in the extreme, and he was the more assured of the absurdity of it as he left her studio with her other absurd idea fresh in his mind. Of

course, a man could not argue such cases with a girl like that, they were usually so illogical; but if Monica interested herself at all, she was more than illogical—she had no respect for any institution simply on the grounds of its acceptance by the majority. It had to be weighed and measured in her own scales; in fact, she was dangerously near to being anarchistic, and a girl like that is a firebrand in a family. He wished she was safely settled in life.

In fact, she made him think of her all the way down to his club, and he wished he had left Lulu to her fate with Mrs. Smythe-Orville, for that child was constantly getting one into hot water. He could see that Monica had been more than a little impressed by that age limit question. At any rate, he could thank the gods that she was not a suffrage worker. He was convinced that enough women of that temperament would undermine the constitution of the United States if ever they arrived at organization, for which, of course, they were mentally and emotionally unfit.

Mrs. Dacy passed Rosa at the door and hastened along the hall to the studio, where Monica was taking all advantage possible of the light remaining.

"Can I get a pencil here?" she asked. "I've broken mine and am in a dilemma; or will you write a line for me on this card? Gloves make it difficult."

Monica took a pencil from the shelf of the easel and the visiting card from Mrs. Dacy.

"Just 'regret that I must postpone meeting until

tomorrow, 11:30,'" she suggested. "Thanks," she said, as Monica wrote the desired message. "I made two engagements for the same hour, and as one is a foreign mission affair I must postpone the other."

"Will you have tea? Rosa is bringing it in now."

"No, I am having tea in the mission rooms with Fannie and Lulu, but I will get Rosa to fasten my boot; the lace is untied." Then she glanced at the picture on the easel. "It is lovely," she conceded, "but I am angry with you; your ideas are simply shocking."

Monica smiled after the lady as she went out through the music room to find Rosa.

"I wish they would all become so angry that they would allow me to get some work done," she observed. "Your next day to pose I shall tack a large placard on the door, 'Not at home to the family.' You are the honey around which the flies all buzz, and I can't be interrupted—oh, how do you do, Mr. Hallet? Glad to see you."

She and Nell exchanged amused glances as Hallet entered, followed by Sargent. She shook hands with Hallet and nodded to Sargent almost without looking at him and laid aside the brushes as Rosa entered with the tea tray.

While Hallet crossed to Nell and looked at the portrait, Sargent halted at the tea table and regarded Mrs. Wayne with a gaze so steady that, after one fleeting glance at him, the pouring of tea absorbed all of her attention, and she bit her lip in nervous impa-

tience at the certainty that the color was flaming over her face, and that even her bent head could not conceal it.

"So there are people with whom you do shake hands occasionally," he remarked.

At the words the color faded, she raised her head slowly, and it was with her usual guardedly polite smile she met his gaze and offered him tea.

"I believe I have clasped hands with you, have I not?"

"Once," he assented. "It was the first time we met. You were never so gracious again — to me."

She had no quick retort to his bitter words. He knew she avoided him at every turn, and she knew he knew it. There was nothing to say.

Hallet carried tea to Nell, and Monica, after all had been served, took her cup to the extreme end of the studio, studying the portrait from there; and then forgetting tea, picked up the brushes, making a slight change in the drawing, and thus was back at the work instead of having a *tête-à-tête* with the man whose strange, puzzled gaze affected her more than it would be wise to let him guess.

"Oh, Lane, I utterly forgot to meet you as we had planned," said Nell, contritely; but he smiled at her absently, and turned his attention to the work on the portrait.

"It really did not matter," he returned with the careless desire to appear amiable; but Nell noted the

carelessness, if not the amiability, and her glance suggested that she was more than usually piqued.

"Certainly not," she remarked, with humorous sarcasm. "There is no feminine creature in Christendom worth devoting your thoughts to except your Twilight Lady of the love letters and the drawings — when you find her."

"Nell!" and the tone of Sargent was imperative, though low.

"Love letters? Interesting subject," said Hallet, with a desire to quell the rising storm in Nell's face, but he was too late. The quarrel with Tony had left her irritable and nervous, and at the corrective note in Sargent's utterance of her name all the barriers of restraint were down.

"You need not shout at me like that," she protested, defiantly, "for it's no secret. They both," and her wide gesture included Monica and Hallet, "know all about it."

"They know?" and Sargent's eyes were hard and dark in a flash.

"I told them," she announced, lightly. "It was too pretty a romance to keep. I'm going to tell it to Gillie for his novel, or play, or whatever that child of his brain is to be."

"I shall have to correct your statement as to 'love letters,'" said Sargent, coldly. "The 'letters of a lady' would be a more accurate description."

"Nell, quit your quarreling, and get back into position, please," suggested Monica. "There is still a bit of light."

Nell returned to the chair sulkily, gave her cup to Hallet, and an injured glance to Sargent.

"Of course, she did not write the word 'love' all over them," she conceded; "it was merely a mental affinity. Oh, yes, we've all met them."

"Remember, please, that I did not meet this one."

"Or," guessed Nell, keenly, "you wouldn't be here?"

"Probably not," he conceded, impatiently.

"You see," and the sweep of Nell's arms called heaven and earth to witness, "that's the way he makes love to me!"

"Was there an actual lady in the case?" asked Hallet.

"There was," assented Sargent, "and I am figuratively at her feet for ever making mention of those first letters concerning the drawings. She wrote the most beautiful letters I have ever read. She illustrated that book of mine as if she had known all the cited bits of that coast. I shall be in her debt so long as I live."

"And you never even learned her name?"

"Never; the name was understood to be assumed. There was some family reason why she could not be known as the illustrator of that story. After the publi-

cation and reproduction details were settled, the lady ceased the correspondence. All I could ever identify her by would be the writing."

"Then you have the letters?" asked Hallet, as he picked up the mahl-stick Monica had let fall. She was trying to work despite the clash of the two minds and Nell's restlessness.

"Certainly I have the letters; my only chance of ever finding her."

"You see," announced Nell in triumph, "he is still looking for her!"

"But there are so many—so very many persons who write alike," observed Monica, "it would be unfair to make that the only test."

"I should make no mistake," said Sargent, stubbornly. "If I had only three words I should make no mistake. The writing had a character of its own."

"You really believe that the interest on the part of the woman was entirely platonic, concerned only with your work?" asked Hallet.

"Certainly I do. They were such letters as a very bright boy might write, a boy alive with enthusiasm for research along unconventional lines, a mind filled with beautiful ideals, and a very limited knowledge of human nature as it really is!"

"Do you forget," persisted Hallet, "that the unknown started with an immense advantage over you? Your photographs were used considerably in newspapers and magazines."

Sargent looked at him in frowning perplexity. Evidently it had not occurred to him.

"Of course," decided Nell with conviction. "The woman was in love with him personally all the time; any man but Lane would have known it!"

"Have you no opinion, Madame Monica?" asked Hallet. "You should understand the artistic temperament, and you have seen the charming illustrations."

"Mrs. Wayne finds no charm in them," observed Sargent, and Hallet regarded her in surprise.

"Is that possible?" he asked.

"They are pretty," she conceded, "though there is nothing really big about them, a trifle immature, perhaps, as were the thoughts in the letters."

"But the immaturity of the ideas, the evidence of youth and lack of experience was one of the greatest charms of the letters," said Sargent.

"All the heavenly ideals," remarked Nell, lightly.

"You also read the — the effusions?" asked Monica.

"*Me,*" and Nell's expression was comic in its pretence of humility. "Do you suppose my degenerate eyes would be allowed to rest on them? No," and she shook her head, sadly, "I can only judge the cause by noting the effect. He was unnaturally good for a long time after the first letters came — I always have my doubts of men who are unnaturally good. Then there was a season when he radiated hope and happiness *and* ceased all reference to the unknown artist! When a final letter came ending the correspondence,

telling him she was married, well, he fell from grace — painted the town lurid for a week! You need n't scowl, Lane; you know you did. I was the only one who guessed the reason, so he acknowledged the soft impeachment, called himself several sorts of a fool, and — asked me to marry him."

"Nell, how absurd you can be, even when you are charming," remarked Sargent, who had controlled his first flash of angry amaze and accepted her exaggerations with an ironic smile; but the girl knew that he was more than a little irritated that Monica was hearing and smiling in the cool manner with which she usually favored all things pertaining to Sargent. They never seemed to get on with each other.

"Oh, I know," she retorted. "You are half in love with that woman still, even though she did trick you, and have her fun. But, of course, the love is of the unearthly, idealistic sort, and warranted not to affect our humdrum plans of a winter wedding."

"Exalted ideals harm no one," observed Hallet.

"Not such short-lived ones as those of Mr. Sargent," added Monica, with a little mocking smile — "a week, an entire week, until he had transferred his devotion to a new shrine! Mr. Gilman should be here to note the limits of modern love."

"One cynic is quite enough," said Sargent, regarding her moodily. He could endure Nell's tirades, and smile, but the ridicule of Monica Wayne was a different thing.

"Meaning me?" she asked.

"Meaning you," he assented. "You with your spirit of mockery could never understand that woman of the letters, the woman who never mocked at anyone, who had a sympathy with human frailty as deep and as wide as the ocean she pictured. It was remarkable in a young woman. She did not criticise, she *understood.*"

"And you are doubtful of me?" she queried. "But I assure you I could understand. Why, after Nell's account, I fancy I could even draw her picture. She is probably some tender soul advanced in years without ever having had a real romance. The story of marriage is probably a harmless fiction. If she has a husband, why not discuss with him those ideals of hers? No, she is ugly and was afraid you would discover the fact. No pretty woman disguises herself too much for detection. She preferred leaving to you the illusion she had created. She will die some day when you are on the very pinnacle of fame, and your letters will be found, tied with pink ribbon, and they will be published together with her picture — and yours! You will regret the day you ever learned to write. Again, for a week, will earth and sky be lurid, and mental affinities — unpopular."

The merriment of Nell and Hallet was all the applause she got for this humorous conception. Sargent looked at her with somber, questioning eyes. He had never before seen her so alive with the spirit of

ridicule, and towards himself she had usually exhibited only a guarded civility.

"Strange that you have no sympathy with emotional natures," he observed, "for, pardon me, your face, and even your voice, would suggest that you might have, but you have evidently lived too studious a life to comprehend real people; you only have mental pictures of what men and women ought to be, and their loves only serve you for a laugh."

"I shall have to take sides if you get into that sort of analysis," remarked Hallet. "You are severe."

"When I see real love I shan't laugh," and Monica turned back to her work.

Sargent made no comment, only looked back at her, and after one fleeting glance she did not care to meet his eyes again. Words she could ridicule or refute, but not eyes.

Hallet was at a table looking over a collection of photographs of foreign paintings and held one up as treasure trove.

"Here is something to balance all your cynical arguments, Madame Monica," he declared in triumph, "a picture of Francesca and Paola. How do you excuse a love like theirs?"

"A love like that is its own excuse," she replied, promptly; "a love one is willing to live for, suffer for, and—die for!" She caught a glance from Sargent which caused her to turn to Hallet with a lighter air and a little shrug. "I keep that to help me have faith

in real loves. I like to forget the papier-maché imitations about me."

"You only believe in the love of dead lovers," retorted Nell.

"It is no longer in their power to be unfaithful," she observed, demurely.

"Must one have died centuries ago to be given a thought from you?" asked Hallet, replacing the photograph. "Have you no belief in the living loves of today?"

"The living loves of today," she said, mockingly, as she observed Sargent still watching her, "built on the dead loves of yesterday. Oh, yes, I believe, help thou my unbelief!"

"Monica, you are positively sacrilegious," cried Nell.

"No," she said, decidedly, to this accusation. "Love is the only religion worth living or dying for. It is you worldlings who are sacrilegious when you discard the real and accept the imitations — oh, are you going?" she asked, as Hallet offered his hand; "have I frightened you away?"

He smiled, shaking his head, but said nothing. His good, safe friendship seemed a sort of anchor in their group of irresponsibles, and she added, "Come again, please?"

"As I am one of the abused imitations I will go with you, Hallet," said Sargent. "Am I forgiven my per-

sonalities, Mrs. Wayne?" he queried, with a smile. She nodded carelessly.

"Certainly, this seems a sort of Liberty Hall, where all the family unload their troubles and fight out their battles. I strive to be an impartial judge of the ring, but occasionally I do take sides."

"So I see. Nell, I have an engagement with your aunt at a jeweler's," he said, looking at his watch, "and will call for you when the working light is quite gone."

The two went out together and Monica worked in silence under the puzzled regard of Nell, who wondered vaguely what it was that made Monica so aggressively alert and sarcastic. It really was a fact that they had all piled in on her with their own little problems, and perhaps she was tired of it, still—"

"That remark of yours about imitations fairly cut Lane," she said at last.

"Yes, he probably does not like the truth and is growing too famous to hear it often," observed Monica, stepping back to look at the picture from a different angle. "You two became engaged through pique. He is dreaming of some unknown woman, and you are thinking of Tony Allen—but Tony is going away."

"Away from little old New York?" said Nell, skeptically. "Not really, you know!"

"Yes, really," returned Monica, decidedly; "promised me."

"I don't see why you interest yourself," declared Nell. "Why didn't you send Lane away?"

"Because he is none too good for you, and Tony is, When you foolishly discarded him he did not fly to another woman in order to forget."

"How you do hate Lane," said Lane's fiancée, "and he thinks you perfection."

"Position, please!" suggested Monica, "and don't tilt your head at that angle. To discuss your love affairs always gives you a scowling expression."

"Well, with so much interference, is it any wonder?" demanded Nell, and then the head was again at the wrong angle, and she asked, "Is that actually true about Tony?"

"It certainly is. You won't see him until after the wedding."

"Oh, won't I?" demanded Nell, out of the chair and jabbing hat pins viciously in the mass of plumage she called a hat. "The idea of him going without even a proper good-by!"

"Mr Sargent is to call for you," reminded Monica as Nell started for the hall.

"Send him away; you'll like that."

"But your picture—"

"My expression is spoiled for today," said Nell, mockingly; "too many sweethearts!"

As she disappeared in the outer hall Monica Wayne drew a great breath of relief, and put aside palette and brushes, and walked the length of the studio and back with her hands clasped behind her, back and forth, back and forth, restless as some caged thing.

"Another day like this and I should go frantic," she muttered, "simply frantic!"

The old colored woman came in, picked up the brushes, straightened a rug, placed a chair in its own nook, and generally set things at rights after the very strenuous day. She glanced occasionally towards her mistress with a world of love in her mild, velvety eyes.

"Headache, Miss Mona?" she ventured at last, and at that Monica halted in her restless walk and laughed shortly.

"Would I be tramping like this if I had a headache?" she asked. "No, Maum Rosa, I am only tired of people, and people, and people."

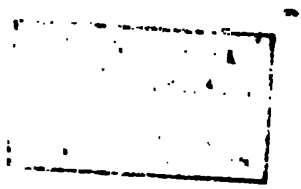
"*Umph!* Why bless youah haht, Miss Mona, I been so plum glad of all these folks a-comin' that I never reckoned they'd tire you out this a-way! Can't I—can't I do somethin'?" she asked, as Monica sat down on the dais of the model chair and rested her head on the throne.

"No, Maum Rosa, not a thing—unless," she added, "you know enough voudou to transport us both into one of the wild corners of old Mexico where no white folks can find the way."

"Voudou, *me!*" gasped the scandalized Rosa, "Miss Mona, I follow you cheerful most any place 'cepten' to that Mexico place where red niggahs live. I might follow you even thah," she added, cautiously, "but I ain't a-goen cheerful."

Monica smiled absently, her thoughts already far

"Forget? Forget?" she whispered incredulously



afield, but as the faithful creature was going softly away she aroused with a quick sigh and stopped her.

"How old are you, Maum Rosa?" she asked.

"Me? I'm close on sixty-five, I reckon, an' good," she added, hopefully, "for twenty years yet!"

"And I am — twenty-two," she said, thoughtfully. "I also may live sixty years — like this. Oh," and she got suddenly to her feet, "it's a long, long time to look forward to — alone!"

Rosa did not hear the last word. It was a mere breath of a word.

"But taint so far to look back," she said, cheerfully "The yeahs — why, Miss Mona, they's jest like miles in a road. Some of them have milestones an' some haven't any. The path an' the roads, an' even ole milestones, get growed over with grass an' tangle brush in sixty years, an' we forget all about them, Miss Mona, we forget all about them."

"No!" burst out Monica, with a vehemence startling to the old nurse, "I — I shan't forget, ever! I don't want to forget, I *will* not forget! Oh, go Rosa, and leave me alone. Those people made me nervous, or else I was tired when they came — and the work —"

Rosa went out, closing the door softly.

And Monica Wayne sat alone a long time, her chin resting on her hand, her eyes staring straight ahead as if for sight of the long line of the future years.

"Forget? Forget?" she whispered, incredulously.

CHAPTER XI

SHE was still there when the last reflection of a red sunset flooded the room. It outlined the red of her robe in dusky flame, and cast curious reflected warmth on the pale profile.

The rest of the room was in soft gray shadow, and McLane Sargent halted on the threshold, perfectly still, almost holding his breath at the harmony of the picture and the uncanny charm it held for him.

Nell had left the outer door ajar and he had entered without ringing, fully expecting her criticism for his tardiness.

And instead he had walked in on the silence of the one woman whose charm for him was so baffling. She looked appealingly girlish. The curve of the lips was sad and there was no mockery in the eyes — they suggested unshed tears. It was girlhood on which he looked, girlhood, and not happy, and he would have given much to retreat unseen.

But he dared not even attempt it, and suddenly he stepped off the rug to the bare floor.

"I sincerely beg your pardon, Mrs. Wayne," he began, but she rose to her feet with a gasp of fear.

"I — I seem fated to do the wrong thing," he said. "The door was open and I thought —"

"She has gone," she interrupted, hurriedly; "yes, Nell has gone, she could not wait, she said—"

"Never mind what she said," he suggested, soothingly, "I have startled you again most abominably, and I did want much to be in your good graces enough to be allowed an interview."

"With me?" she asked, recovering her serenity somewhat, though her breath was still uneven, and her heart fluttering somewhere nearer her throat than usual. She designated a chair by a gesture, and added, "As a cousin-to-be you need not be so ceremonious."

"Thanks," he said, rather grimly, "it was on the strength of that same misty cousinhood Hallet begged me to speak to you."

"Did I shock him?" she smiled, suddenly relieved in a way. If it was a message from Hallet it was of course not a thing to be nervous over. "Nell said I shocked you."

"I am becoming hardened to it," he observed, but did not meet her eyes, and there was a perceptible silence before he finally said, very quietly:

"Will it be something more to mock at if I tell you he is much in love with you?"

She looked at him very directly, but his eyes avoided her; he was regarding with apparent interest the carvings on a façade across the street. She felt again mistress of the situation and began to laugh softly.

"Have you, in addition to your other honors, become ambassador to the Court of Love?"

He looked pale in the gray light, and his face hardened at the sarcasm of her words and the disdain in her laugh, but his voice was even and restrained as he said:

"He is not the man to risk offending you in any way, and that letter from Italy has made him wretched; the more so that he has the feeling that Mr. Wayne meant to follow the letter. He knows that the family will try to influence you to consider the settlement offered you, and he has no one to trust but me."

Monica had banished her smile. She could not even look at him as his low tones thrilled her by their very restraint. It gave her a curious shock to hear him mention Wayne. It was as a sort of barrier passed.

"And you advise—?"

Her voice was low as his own, and the two guarded voices in the gray light might have belonged to conspirators of a tragic possibility.

"I cannot advise," he said, after a silence through which expression forced itself. "I have reached the limit of my promise. He strongly advises divorce and wants to get it for you; but if it is to be a reconciliation he needs to know it. Naturally he can't make proposals to the wife of Glyndon Wayne."

"Don't!" she cried, imperatively, all her restraint gone. "I am not—I never will be the wife of that man! No law of any land can make me more free

than my own will. They make me wild — all these people with their laws of state, of society, of the creeds! There is more virtue in breaking half of them than in keeping them. Right here, today I heard of certain laws so infernal in their intent that — oh they disgust me with the hypocrisies under their legal form. I shall be my own law and live by it. All I ask is to be left alone."

"I regret having annoyed you," he said, in the same colorless, even tones. "I could not refuse to come, I —"

A ring at the door came to them, and so tense had been the moments that they both arose, alert and silent, looking at each other.

Then they heard the voice of Lulu, and a moment later she entered, as usual tempestuously.

"Oh, has Nell gone?" she asked, as she glanced about, and then seeing Sargent she added, "Did you get the card?"

"What card?" he asked, "have you sent me a picture postal?"

"No, but I will," she laughed. "I mean the card I left with your man, Mrs. Dacy's card postponing her engagement with you until eleven-thirty tomorrow."

"No, Lulu, I kept the engagement, but the lady failed. I have not been to my hotel or seen the card, but it doesn't matter. I'll remember — eleven-thirty tomorrow."

He turned to the window and did not even glance at Monica. It was not so easy to pick up the cloak of carelessness at the advent of a third person.

"You forgot your gloves, Lulu," said Monica, and lifting them from the table walked over with them to the mantel where the girl followed, wonderingly.

"Lulu, get back that card," she said, lowly, her eyes on Sargent at the window. "Bring it here to me at once, Lulu, at once!"

"Of course," agreed the puzzled girl, wondering at the tensity and secrecy in her manner. "Is it important?"

"Important enough to put your portrait next on the easel."

"Oh, I'll simply fly! Good-bye, Mr. Sargent."

Monica leaned on the back of a chair and the world seemed to go around her. Her back was to Sargent, and she strove to regain command of herself before he should see her face. Once she reached mechanically to press the electric button for light, but her hand fell nerveless, afraid.

Then, out of the whirling gray of her world, she heard his voice.

"It was for that girl's sake you refused the divorce," he was saying, "to save her from the scheme of a vain, ambitious woman, and a man whose money she hoped to secure. Can I tell Hallet that when she is her own guardian, or married, that you will ask for divorce?"

Then she heard him say, "Mrs. Wayne, you are ill!" and realized that she had sunk down into the chair and that only his voice and the dread of failing utterly, held her to the thread of a slight consciousness.

"I will call your woman," he said, and crossed to the door; but she stopped him.

"No—I am not ill—not at all," and she struggled to her feet, only to sink back into the chair, weak and white, but smiling slightly, with a last attempt to assume a strength she did not possess.

"Not ill, but sometimes I am overwhelmed by the many joys of life; the pretty plans my friends arrange for me—there are so many of them, and each opposes the other—so what can I do but refuse them all, all! Poor empty-handed ambassador from Cupid's court! You have to go back with nothing; but—" and suddenly she broke down appealingly, "Don't let them send any one else to me—don't, ever again!"

And then the skies seemed to fall and all the world changed, and out of the chaos came only his voice.

There were words, and words, heard as in a dream, and gradually—

"—I came—to hide from him that I was afraid to come! It has been like a foretaste of hell to think of him sharing your life. You know it all now—at least the pretense is over. You won't speak, so of course you will find some good reason to close your door against me. I have presumed to interfere in your per-

sonal affairs. I accept any sentence from you, but — do you mean to live all your life alone — like this?"

"Alone — like this!"

She did not mean to speak, silence seemed the only weapon she had left, but she heard herself repeat his words, and knew she must not do even that again.

"Monica!"

She lifted her hand in protest, but his words and his nearness overwhelmed her like a flood.

"Let me at least say the name aloud once! I've whispered it to myself each day and each night since I met you first. You never gave me a thought more than to an ordinary acquaintance, but it was a real woman and no longer an imaginary one, who stood between Nell and me."

"Go, please go!" she whispered, so faintly that only Love's ears could hear. Her back was to him as she huddled down in the chair, her hands clasped over her breast, her face averted, the very picture of cowering fear.

"Monica, I shall do one of two things — marry Nell at once if we are ever to marry, or else leave America within a week. Do you know why? Shall I tell you why?"

"Oh — go, go!" she muttered, without lifting her head.

"— Because I could not trust myself again in this casual friendly rôle. I should forget, as I am forget-

ting now, all the conventional walls meant to keep you from me—"

"Go!" and the word had become a plea instead of a command.

"—I should have a mad desire to beat them down, or throw them aside. I could remember only a girl whose life is desolate, and that I am a man who—adores her."

Deeper and deeper she crouched in the chair, her face covered, and the trembling, convulsive breaths told him she was weeping.

To the man standing over her she was no longer the mocking, alluring, baffling woman, she was a child whom his wild words had hurt, and his very heart with all its weight of longing crept into his voice and to the tips of his fingers as he bent over and touched her shoulder.

"Monica!"

At his touch she shrank from under his hand, frightened at him or at something within her own nature—sleeping—sleeping—until his words, his touch, had wakened her! She was filled with terror, and could find no word to say, yet he must go—go—go!

Hysterically she laughed in sheer fear, and at the laugh he stood erect as if she had struck him. That movement gave her courage, and she pointed to the door.

He took one step towards her, his hand flung out in

protest, but her laughter rang clear, and the mockery slashed at him like a knife.

"Worthy ambassador for Cupid's court!"

For an instant he stood in the doorway, his face ashen white, his hands clenched in the effort at self-restraint, then her hand groped back of her to the wall and touched the electric button, and the blaze of light flashed in his eyes, eyes hard with pain as he dashed aside the portier and went out with the sound of her mocking laughter in his ears.

For an instant she stood tense and staring — her eyes on the place where he had been.

Then a door opened and closed.

Her world of dreams was empty, and she knew she had driven out the other half of her life.

With a little cry she ran to the entrance and gathered to her lips the curtain where his hand had been, and sank down a crumpled heap, a lonely staring creature in the glare of the light.

After a long time she looked about the room as if it was a new world into which she had emerged, and her lips seemed stiff as with cold, when she muttered:

"Alone! sixty years, and the grass grows — and covers the landmarks, and we — in time — forget!"

CHAPTER XII

THAT evening, Lulu, in a telephone booth, was calling impatiently for Mrs. Wayne's number, after her attempts at the door of the apartment had proven useless. No one had answered the door.

At last the receiver was taken down and Central said, "Go ahead."

"Is that you, Mrs. Wayne? Yes, it's Lulu. I've been trying to get you hours and hours! What?—headache? Oh, I'm so sorry! No, I could not find the man I gave the card to, he had gone on an errand, but I left word, and will see him the very first thing in the morning, it's only around the corner from our hotel. I'll be there early. No, don't hang up, I've such news! Mr. Sargent won't be interested in cards or engagements tomorrow, he will have something more important to think of. What?—can't hear? Yes, I said Mr. Sargent. Nell Mitford has walked off and got married and cheated us out of wedding cake. Isn't that the craziest thing? No, I don't know details, she telephoned from the pier. Mama is with Mrs. Dacy, who is having hysterics over it—so scandalized. That settles poor Tony Allen! I wouldn't do such a crazy thing with all the plans made for a perfectly beautiful wedding; but I suppose if you are

dead in love with a man—what? Oh, well, yes, do lie down again. I do hope you will feel better in the morning. Good-night, dear. Let me know if I can come around and do anything. Good-night!"

Late that evening George Hallet was surprised to be told Mrs. Wayne wanted to speak to him on the telephone, and he was more surprised when her clear tones came to him telling him to make a legal application for her divorce at once.

"Don't ask me questions about it. I will mail this same signed request to you tonight. I am worn out with the subject and the contention. No, don't talk to me about it. You know all there is to do. I am going away to get freedom from the family discussion. When it is safely under way I will come back to work. There will be no use to ask Rosa, she won't know where I am. No, don't ask me questions. Lulu is out of the mind of Glyndon Wayne, and—I simply can't endure the situation. I would leave America before I would consider a reconciliation, and their arguments in favor of it will be endless unless there is a divorce. Don't talk, just arrange the application immediately, and make it impossible for me to draw back. I have been worn out by the subject and am going away tonight. I care nothing for the legal details, only end this controversy. Good-night."

"Thank God!" said Hallet, as he hung up the receiver, and sat long into the night, smoking, and thinking of the time when he should dare tell her as much

as he had acknowledged to Sargent — Sargent, the good fellow who had no doubt helped to bring this decision about!

And he did not tell her of a wireless then on his desk brought in by Dacy to whom it was addressed, —

S. S. CARMANIA.
9.50 Oct. 30th, 1912.

Am following letter. Give you carte blanche for settlements, only arrange quickly. WAYNE.

"Thank God!" murmured George Hallet again, and fell to estimating how best to take advantage of each hour allowed before the coming of the man who hoped to buy back a girl he had only remembered for six years as an irritating encumbrance.

CHAPTER XIII

THE sumac was red under the fleeting sky of Indian summer, and the rugged shore was forsaken of the summer colony. No one remained to comment on the fact that smoke issued from the great stone chimney of the cottage among the twisted trees on the north shore. Some fishermen noted a light there in the cove of the sunken reefs, and a small boat, a "half-rater," stood out to the open sea at times and crossed their water trails and sailed back at dusk into the little harbor; but any sailor who could make the harbor of the sunken reefs without help did not need watching, and the little group of fishermen in the cottages on the other side of the rugged rock thrust out to sea, had little of curiosity concerning the remnants of the summer groups, or the stragglers who lingered after the frosts.

Thus Monica Wayne, fleeing as from crime, hid herself in the one place she trusted they would not expect her to go at that season. They would probably conclude she had gone south, in fact they would conclude several things not true. The principal one would be that she had fled because of Glyndon Wayne and the family interests, whereas she would not have turned out of her way to pass him on the street, so indifferent had she grown to all thoughts of his personality.

But she was terror-stricken and tingling with dread lest some unguarded moment would come to her, some hour of weakness in which others might see the truth she had learned of herself and of McLane Sargent—that even *he*—

But at that thought the terror of that scene in the studio came over her again. She had to get away to think, to make plans, to burn all the bridges and sever herself from these kindly folk who had been so much a part of her life in the East.

The thought of the divorce was like the straw to the drowning man. It was the one logical thing she could use to excuse her sudden departure from their midst. It would explain everything to all of them. There would be dismay and regret and gossip, but there would be no questions; there would, above all, be no doubt in the mind of any of them—even *he* could not doubt!

She scarcely dared think of him by name, though she had never forgotten him since the day when she rode her dripping horse into the one little street of San Juan, raging against the jealous native element, and in the midst of her daring insolence she had seen his eyes travel from the horse to her and made her suddenly ashamed of her fury, her bare feet, and the Indian banda about her braided hair.

Yet that attire, and her angry Spanish, had seemed as a mask for her these many weeks. Had she spoken English he must surely have solved long ere this the mystery of her voice. How often had she seen him

listen when she spoke and watch her with a puzzled eagerness as if at any moment the veil might lift and a glimpse be gained of that other life somewhere, sometime when her voice had sounded in his ears!

And they had come so near, within a few feet of each other, only one short day before she had given up her legal freedom!

The Fates had brought their trails thus very close as if in irony of human foresight, and now — after the long circle of many days, and dreary years, he had said the words never to be unsaid — he had called to her as to a mate, had laid his very heart bare, and had been sent away in the silence with which she had wrapped her life.

All these moments were lived over by her alone on the cliffs above the sunken reefs, and out of the chaos into which she had plunged she was making plans, and plans!

Among her father's papers there was a description of a wonderful old forgotten villa in the heart of Mexican forests where mines had been lost in the days of revolution and inquisition, and the forest had overgrown the ancient principality; but on her wall was a picture of a marble-pillared dwelling — steps of marble led down to a water garden where statues and carven columns marked the restful ways, and a great mountain of white and violet loomed in the far distance as seen through the forest trees.

It was an unbelievable paradise in the midst of a

wild forgotten corner of the land, yet the thought of it had always held a fascination for her, though she had never seen it.

She studied the picture, and she searched through the old Mexican records for every note concerning it. Her father had died of jungle fever not far from there. It had been his headquarters, though he ranged south to Yucatan and west along the coast. But to this Eden in the wilderness he and an old scientific friend had returned again and again for the mere joy of existence there and the ever alluring mystery of the primitive people of the region.

It was unknown to Americans. None of her own group would ever seek her there—and with Maum Rosa—

So she paced the road above the cliffs and thought and made plans by which her life would not again cross trails with the one man whose voice was as a caress, whose real self was so close that he kept pace beside her day time and night time. She, independent and self-reliant all her days, was no longer alone, and felt that her life was enveloped by the force of his wild need of her.

That Aztec love song came back haunting her, in Nell's voice—Nell's!

> Though wide you range the forest through,
> I wake with thee, deep in thy heart I rest.
> When trembles in my ear the turquoise blue
> I know it is thy heart within my breast!

The tones of Nell came to her in every syllable, Nell —who had been the one wholesome, natural, loving chum among them all. And it was Nell whom she could never face again with eyes unashamed, Nell— whose voice sounded through all the songs she best loved, Nell—to whose life he must belong through all the years, while she—

Over and over she thrust from her these thoughts, only to have them return as regularly as the billows followed each other in from the ocean. The restlessness of the surging sea echoed her own heart-beats as they swept against the bulwarks of stone in the land-locked harbors. The wild crash of the waters broke like thunder on the great brown boulders, curled in white foam in every crevice, and swept out to the depths again, leaving never a trace on the great curved wall of the cliff. The wall built by the fates around her own life was like that. Though she dashed herself forever against them nothing would change the barrier— the barrier she could never pass! Like the shattered waves there was no peace, no rest, unless it were to be found in some deepest depths far below the moving shimmering surface.

And again her thoughts drifted to that wonderful hidden place of the old Mexican garden. No corner of Europe would so surely bar out the world for her, and perhaps, after awhile, when the ache in the heart was less keen, if ever such time should come—

Thus she sailed out to sea, glad of the harsh, keen

winds to fight, some physical thing to conquer, that for even a short space she might escape her own thoughts and her own vague wild plans of flight.

Thus when the dusk came and the walls of the house oppressed her, she would walk over the road where they had walked together in strange silence that first evening. Each turn, each curve of the shore, each great boulder by the wayside, was a mute witness that here their feet had halted, and their very souls met without speech.

And wandering thus alone and aimless in the dusk, she came above the little cove with the cabin built of wreckage and the old hull of a boat, where no one had lived since old man Craig had gone away and died somewhere on the south shore. It was a desolate-looking place, and scurrying clouds sent queer shadows over it at times, and again the starlight and the white surf leaping beyond it gave it a clear silhouette peculiar and weird.

Suddenly across the desolate little strip of shore she discerned a thing more definite than shadow moving in the half light—a slender, halting figure, and at times the flutter of a scarf.

Once the figure seemed literally to sink into the ground, and Monica, startled and alert, found herself watching the spot with a sort of fascinated horror. Fishermen's wives were not prone to cross the rocks in the dusk to the deserted cabin of the old dead sailor. She herself had walked down there in the morning and

felt oppressed by the empty husk of that which had been once a home. No one had touched the rude furnishings beyond the removal of wearing apparel and bedding. She had learned that Hettie had disposed of the few saleable things and gone somewhere into Gloucester to live.

Monica had found herself wondering if it was a tryst, and glanced along the shore for a possible other visitor to that especially deserted cove; but look where she might she could see nothing but black rock, and white surf as it beat like a hungry monster against the shore.

Then, with a sharp tingling thrill of recognition, she saw the slight shadowy figure rise again from the sand, and with a horrible, definite, reckless movement throw the scarf aside, and with arms upstretched as in supplication, run straight for the fury of the wild surf.

Monica heard a scream which she did not recognize as her own, and straight as an arrow dashed down the cliff, speeding along the edge of the roaring surf and throwing herself on the slender figure with such force that both fell, and the creeping fingers of the hungry sea reached out again until they were covered with spray and soaked on the wet sands.

The girl was stunned, and Monica, gasping for breath in the face of the spray, held her as best she could in the shelter of her own body. She had no idea who she held, only that it was some desperate soul who perhaps could return to her no thanks. She

herself knew what it meant to stand on the cliffs and think with longing of the rest out there beneath the waves.

But when the girl stirred and spoke, she knew the voice. It was Hettie.

"It would have been better to let me go out to sea," she whispered. "There is no place for me on land."

"We will see," said Monica Wayne, getting to her feet and helping the girl, who was weak and trembling. "If you can walk, we will go home."

"Home!"

The voice of the girl had little of hope in it. She was too worn, however, to make protest, and slowly she was led up the cliff, resting often, and so weak that Monica's arm circled her, and more than once prevented her from sinking to the ground.

"Are you hurt?" she asked, in some anxiety, thinking for the first time of the distance to any one if help were needed; but the girl sank to the couch as they entered the living room, and smiled drearily.

"No," she half whispered, "only it has been long since I had food; and I walked, and—and—walked to get here. There is no place even to die in the towns."

Monica gave her one look of horror and utter understanding, and asked no more questions. Out of the stores in the closets she brought brandy and milk, and with an alcohol lamp had hot soup and crackers, all

she dared give her at first; and the listless, indifferent eyes of the girl smiled wistfully as the wet clothes were stripped from her and she was wrapped in garments soft and warm.

"I don't know what to say," she ventured at last. "You will think me wicked, for I—meant to do it."

"I know," said Monica. "Don't think about it, or if you do, just think that you were sent for me to take care of tonight because I needed you."

"*You,* need—*me?*" and the tone was incredulous, yet the eyes had the first little gleam of hope. Oh, if any one needed me, anywhere!"

"Child, the world is full of people who carry that same thought," said Monica, gently. "We are all needed somewhere to help someone."

"But *you*—"

"Even I—" and the smile in Monica's eyes made the girl sink back on the pillow with a little sigh of content. Ere long she was sleeping soundly, and Monica watching her realized that for at least one hour the pain had been driven from her own heart by service to the tired little stray.

CHAPTER XIV

MONICA asked no questions, and the girl only said wistfully that she was alone; that the only work she could get was too heavy. She had been ill, and then there had been no one to recommend her, and she knew little but the life along the shore, so she had come back — but to be so hungry, and to see the loneliness and desolation of the old cabin, and to have no one anywhere in the world to go to — to tell —

All at once she thought she had gone kind of wild, and the surf seemed calling her, and she had remembered a dead woman who drifted in from a wreck to the cove one morning long ago. The woman had looked so peaceful, as if all the trouble of the world had dropped away from her, and she, Hettie, had remembered that; only the face seemed her own face, and all at once she was on her feet and going to meet that peace and leave the troubles behind, and — that was all.

She told her little story half fearfully, watching Mrs. Wayne for sign of expected disapproval, but could discern none. Monica's acceptance of the situation indicated that it was one of the natural instincts to turn back to the old home when the trails of the towns grew difficult; and of course when one is ill even a slight

touch of delirium leads one to do unusual things, but she felt quite sure that the spray would have restored her, and she further suggested that much of Hettie's fantastic imaginings was due to the fact that she had simply fainted on the sands from utter exhaustion—she had never really made an attempt to throw herself into that churning whirlpool, swinging in over the sunken reefs.

Hettie Craig listened gratefully, and all her tired little soul was given strength by the woman who was so wonderful to her, who understood, who wrapped her in soft robes, and laughed at her, who slipped Indian moccasins on her feet, and assured her that with her straight dark hair arranged in the right fashion, she would make a very interesting little *mana,* or Indian maid.

All this in a gay, friendly way, carrying with it no hint of condescension. It was as if in truth she was needed, and as if this wonder woman was really waiting there alone for her at the edge of the land!

Monica made sketches of her in various costumes, and delighted her soul by the assurance that she could make use of her as a model. Her oval face with the great eyes, and tender, childish lips, offered a type valuable for angelic, or Madonna studies. Monica wondered how she had failed to notice it before, but attributed it to the fact that the dressing of her hair had been the usual popular and unbecoming village

mode; but with a narrow fillet, and braided hair over her ears she looked early Italian. With a jeweled net and a gossamer veil, a Venetian girl smiled wistfully out from the drawing Monica showed her after a brief half hour of work, and the profile had all the suggestion of childish curves such as Lippo loved to paint. Monica thought of the prior's niece and smiled and sketched with eager interest, knowing that each brief study was as a lifeline thrown to the girl.

The words of Monica seemed to the little stray simply too good to be true. She had never thought of herself as pretty, and the idea that her face could have a value to an artist, when no one would offer labor for her hands, was too wild a fancy for her to entertain.

Monica saw the trembling doubt in the girl's face, and without further words went to work in a methodical, business-like way; one brief pose after another, until Hettie was dazzled and transformed by the hope beating again through her veins. At last she had been shown that even the wildest dream could come true.

She broke down and wept in sheer gratitude. The saving of her life had brought only a doubtful joy, but the hope of making the life of use, of use to the woman who seemed to her to hold magic in the tips of her fingers — that was as the very gift of the gods!

Monica threatened to draw her with her eyes swollen and her nose red, if she persisted in shedding tears over the fact that she had found an easy job, which

prosaic statement made her laugh and promise to be good, even good enough to pose for the angels Mrs. Wayne declared she needed for certain windows.

Thus, with a light touch of humor here, and a bit of serious encouragement there, the girl was as one new born under the tender, watchful care of Monica Wayne. She went from room to room as in a happy dream, her thin face radiant; and the woman, watching her, was grateful as the homeless child, for it had brought, at the right moment, a new appeal to her own life.

It also brought a needed link with the outer world. She need no longer sail miles down the coast to purchase the little necessities of daily life. With Hettie as errand girl the seclusion was simplified. She needed no other maid, and if the spirit moved her she could resume her work and carry it on indefinitely, or until her own troubled mind could see through the troubling mists.

A day before she would have resented the intrusion of any mortal soul from the outer world, but the absolute dependence of the girl for life itself, struck a new chord to which her own nature responded, all the more that the girl asked never a question, had never a thought that it was even strange to find Mrs. Wayne alone here on the deserted shore. To her adoring heart nothing was strange that Mrs. Wayne should choose to do, and the magic of the art work gave reason for all things.

She never referred to the Dacy household or aught connected with them, and that also was a dread swept aside. In her own avoidance of them it did not even occur to Monica that it was strange a little village girl should not mention the one family where she had been half maid, half seamstress.

Two days went by like that, drifting Indian summer days of a sort of readjustment.

The ache in the heart was no less, nor the loneliness, nor the keen shame at the thought of a possible meeting; but there was new work given to her hand, and with a deeper understanding of pain than she had ever known, she aroused herself to meet it.

To Hettie she gave only one bit of instruction — not to mention her presence, and to make clear to any possible inquirer the fact that she, Hettie, was taking care of the house as her grandfather had formerly done; in this way no villager or fisherman could have any query or even comment on the fact that one cottage out of the many along the shore was occupied.

Monica was considering the chances of sending Hettie to the studio with an order to Rosa for her mail and other necessaries — she dared not write — when the weather turned suddenly murky; danger signals were run up along the coast, and Hettie busied herself getting in the driftwood from the great wood house in the rear. With the instinct of a shore girl she went about preparing for the periodical storm of the equi-

noctial, trusting that moon and tide would not combine to strengthen its fury.

Monica, who had never seen the great autumn storms of the North Atlantic, only laughed at her various preparations, and contented herself with seeing that the boat was snug and in perfect condition. She had the feeling that she would like just once to go out in the face of a gale, and see what did happen away out there beyond the visible reefs, where strange sea stories were laid.

"You would not want to go if you had ever heard the guns of distress thundering out there," said Hettie, shaking her head, "or if you had ever stood on the rocks and counted the dead men, and women too, who drifted in and out, in and out, of the cove! I have seen that sort of thing as far back as I can remember. I guess it must have stamped itself on my mind, that picture, so that when I—lost myself I saw it all over again, only one of the girls had my face, and I thought it meant—"

"It meant that you were hungry and tired, and nothing more," said Monica, promptly, "and as you do not need to travel by water to Manhattan I still think I will send you. I will write out every direction, and the list of articles I require. I told Rosa I would be back or send word in a week. You will be the word. You have been to Boston?"

"Yes, once."

"Then you know enough to travel alone that little

journey of a day. You can take a cab from the depot to my door, and Rosa will start you safely on the return trip. In forty-eight hours you will be back, and no one the worse, or the wiser."

"But if it should storm — and you alone?"

"Don't be foolish. If I had not found you would I not be alone? I am no worse off, indeed I am much better, for you have all things prepared for any sort of storm siege, and the sooner you go the more service you will be to me. I shall stay here to work, and you will return to help me, and Rosa will keep the city studio in order for the day when I go back, and to no one must either of you mention my present haven."

She took the girl in a boat to a shore village, where she was safely started on her little errand to the south, and then, with a few needed articles for their camp table, she headed the boat out again into deep water to circle the dangerous reefs thrust out like great skeleton fingers from the shore, and discernible only at times by the white foam breaking over and away, and ever returning.

The wind of which Hettie was afraid had modified, and there was a warmth in the air slightly different from the crisp autumn chill to which they had grown accustomed. The sky was overcast, and to the southeast was a long yellow streak touching the dark sea at the horizon.

A steamer speeding down from the banks was showing a bit of hull and trail of smoke, but all smaller

craft were scuttling into harbor, and hugging the shore where shelter offered. Some men in a small fishing smack stood at the low rail and shouted at her as she headed north, but she could understand nothing but their gestures directed to the yellow haze widening over the far, black sea.

Even though it should be wind, and much wind, she was going directly away from it. Only little puffs of warm air struck her at times, barely enough to keep sail filled. In less than an hour she would be in the cove with two entire days alone, to think of—

She was guiltily conscious of the fact that she needed those two days alone. After planning every step of the way for Hettie, and safeguarding each move, she felt as if she had wandered far from her real self and must fly back to the silence where the thought of him waited for her!

It was a joy to remember that once at least he had set sail and skimmed the water in her own little boat—that strange, wonderful day when they had spoken in guarded tones, each, as she knew now, afraid, afraid.

Thus every bit of sea and shore spoke to her of him, though they had walked beside each other but twice. The words they had spoken aloud could so easily be counted, but the unspoken—

All these memories came back to her with a rush as she turned homeward alone. The dreams she had driven away came back, and even the pain of them was sweet. By a sort of instinct she steered the boat and

shortened sail as the wind freshened in little gusts. She was scudding over the darkening water, her eyes picking out here and there the little lines of white where the water foamed over the great jaws of the hidden reefs.

With her eyes ahead, feeling her way into the mouth of the cove, she had turned her back on the yellow haze above the horizon, and, glad of the strengthening wind, gave little heed that the murkiness was shot by far smothered flashes from which no sound reached her.

And then, above the song of the wind, and the music of swirling water at the prow, there came the shriek and rumble of the thing following in her wake like a great vulture of the sea with widespread wings! The queer yellow light swept over her and touched the water with strange reflections, the far cliffs looked almost green for an instant, and then the wind struck the boat, tearing away the mast like a broken match tossed aside. The water was piled up like an incoming wall of black. Even in the shock of it she seemed to have seen that same wall, or one suggesting it, long, long ago.

It had been in the desert when a cloudburst sent a volume of water down a dry cañon bed, and she had urged her horse to a higher level and watched it come, the head of it reared high like that of a white-crested serpent.

Just so did the crashing water break over the floor

of the sea as a tidal wave borne onward by the hurricane sweeping landward.

It seemed to lift the little craft bodily and dash it forward, and the girl clinging to the tiller was thrown with such force that her arms seemed torn from their sockets.

For a moment she was stunned and lay helpless at the mercy of the shrieking fury, but when she recovered her hands had never loosened their grip. She even had the thought that if the boat had gone under it would have been found long after with her hands still gripped around the tiller.

But it did not go under, and it was driven straight in shore into that circle of the cove where Hettie had told her the dead moved with other wreckage, around and around after disastrous storms.

And she was going into it straight ahead of the howling gale. At worst she had anticipated only a slight squall which she would easily outride, but this nameless monster of the deep was akin to nothing she had ever seen on the north coast. In Mexican waters she had seen the swift tropic hurricane level everything to be destroyed of wind and water, and this sudden wild rage of the elements had nothing of the temperate zone in it.

In a calm sea there were little stretches of sandy shore visible between the boulders, but now the whole cove was a boiling seething caldron, and the sea

seemed to run mountains high, shutting out all but the sky and the higher cliffs. The waves swinging in roared like thunder as they smashed on the titanic boulders, and the sturdy little boat was as an empty shell tossed from summit to summit of the huge rollers.

Great curves of white spray passed clear over her, a canopy of foam, and kneeling, clinging to the tiller, she was swamped to the waist by the wash of the water.

Straight on a lee shore she was being driven by the gale, and in her mind was only one question — would the boat go under before reaching the shore, or could she be able to keep it head-on before the wind with the thought that the tremendous force might lift it clear to the unseen beach? And if it were the rocks —

She could hear the muffled thunder of the surf above the shriek of the gale, and somewhere out of the low roll of black clouds came short, sharp reports and the ceaseless glare of the artillery of hurricanes.

Kneeling, throwing all her strength on the tiller, peering ahead through the spray, she caught one glimpse of the shore from the crest of a wave ere she plunged downward into a maëlstrom where all the world was a swirl of white foam.

But in that one glimpse she had the numb fear strike her of having lost her way. There was no moment to think or reason concerning it, but in her own

cove there would be no boat, and for one instant she had caught the white outline of a small sail-boat tugging at its anchor as it strove towards the shore.

But she did not see a man who stood braced against the gale by the aid of the two upright oars he held planted in the sand. The small rowboat was at his feet placed for launching if need be, and coatless and shoeless he peered into the storm-driven spray, watching each wave crest crashing on the rock beside him — if only that crippled little craft might strike the beach instead of the wall of brown boulders!

But it did not. There was the sharp crackle of splintered timbers, and then a white face with closed eyes under the green water. Once it was drawn back as if to the maw of the hungry sea, but when it appeared again the man followed it into the surf.

When Monica was conscious of anything but the shock of water in the ears, and the cutting pain in the lungs, she found herself being rolled on the sand by a man whose forehead had an ugly gash from which the blood ran. It had made a hideous mark down his cheek and neck, and the shoulder of his shirt was soaked by it.

She put up her hand weakly, and touched his cheek.

"This time the flood did not divide us!" she whispered.

He thought her delirious, and as she sank again into unconsciousness he lifted her, and staggering in the gale under the dead weight, made his way up the path

to the cottage, laid his burden on the long seat in the veranda, opened a window enabling him to unbolt a side door, made a raid on pantry and sideboard, and when she next wakened it was with the stinging of raw brandy in her throat, her own brandy in her own house! She was wrapped in a blanket like a mummy while the man was striking matches and starting a fire.

He was still coatless and shoeless and dripping. He smiled at her over his shoulder as she drew a deep, audible breath, and reached out one hand, patting her shoulder.

"Good girl!" he said, approvingly; but she made no reply, only stared at him as he adjusted the kindling and sent the flames leaping high in the old chimney.

Then, unmindful of his gruesome appearance, or her silence and frightened eyes, he unwound the blanket from about her and gathered her close — close in his arms.

"You must not! You must — not!" she muttered, striving to evade his lips; but he held her protesting hand and laughed as she sank back in his arms, breathless from his kisses.

"Must I not?" he demanded, in fond derision. "Don't you know that you are mine — my treasure trove! I stole you from the sea, shall I give you up again? And you love me, you know you do! You stopped the *Twilight* letters because you loved me! You have frozen me and mocked me, and put me in hell because you loved me! And now — now you have

applied for that divorce because you love me; and I have come at last for my own, my very own, because—you love me!"

"Nell!" she whispered, sobbingly.

But he smiled, and drew her turned-away face towards him, that he could look in her eyes.

"Nell is somewhere east of that hurricane on her wedding trip," he observed; "and with Tony along she will heed the war of the elements as little as you and I do here."

"Nell—and Tony?"

All her world was changing, and he watched the reflection of the changes in the eyes he had thought of as shadowed flame. The shadows were drifting far, and hope was lighting new fires there. For the first time she dared meet his look without fear.

"And you know—the letters—and—and all?"

"All!" he stated, promptly. "My heart was clamoring to tell it to me from the first moment, but you lied so wonderfully. God! how you tortured me! Will you make amends?—will you? You are mine now; no human thing shall ever come between us again. Do you know that you went into the long sleep under that water and that I—I brought you back into life? You reached your hand to me down there when you said 'The flood could not divide us.' You were half unconscious, you did not know, but—"

"Ah!" she breathed, lifting her hand and drawing his head more close, "but I did know! Oh, Love,

Love, how blind you were! That other time — the flood of the San Juan River — when I rode —"

"When *you* rode — !"

"And you saw me, and did not remember," she went on softly, "and I looked at you, and — never forgot! So close our trails, and then — the world between! Yes, don't let me go from you again — I will make amends!"

CHAPTER XV

THE wreckage along the north shore when the usual equinoctial and the unusual hurricane arrived on the same date, left the beaches strewn with wreckage.

Land and shore had suffered in that houses were unroofed, as well as seagoing craft dragged under and thrown back in fragments on the shore. For six hours the tempest crashed, followed by floods of rain, making investigation of damages most difficult.

A steamer had gone ashore south of Dacy's Harbor, and that tragedy monopolized the local wires to the extent that the Dacys found it impossible to secure detailed information concerning the manner in which the storm had dealt with their own shore property. Telephone wires were down, and chaos ruled along the coast. Hettie Craig, hastening north, was filled with dread of the dangers for Mrs. Wayne during the forty-eight hours of her absence — the accounts of the storm were so terrible, and the house so alone, absolutely isolated by the tempest — and as she read on the train the newspaper accounts of the wreckage and loss of life, she was conscious of the wish that Mrs. Wayne would at least keep enough in touch with the outer world to have a telephone installed in the cottage. She

need not give any attention to it unless she chose, yet in case of an emergency—

Her thought on the subject was interrupted by a familiar voice, and from behind her paper she caught sight of the back of Mr. Dacy's head. He was greeting a shore neighbor, who, like himself, was bound northward to see personally as to damages done by the unusual storm, and repairs to be arranged for ere winter.

"Yes," he was saying, "it is a nuisance to have to run back just after getting packed and away; but there is the Wayne cottage as well as our own, and the man supposed to be in charge of my place can't be reached—out helping with the wrecks, I suppose—so we thought we would run up, Wayne and me."

Hettie fairly held her breath to listen, but the rumble of the train drowned their voices as it moved out of a station.

The name of Wayne did not convey to her any special interest. She knew Mrs. Dacy's name had been Wayne, but of what use this secret hurried journey of hers to a strange city for the letters and other personal things of Mrs. Wayne if the hurricane was sending her relatives to inspect her cottage and see that it was safe?

Of course they would see it was inhabited, and her privacy would be ended!

The mind of the girl worked very fast to plan how she could get out of the depot at Gloucester and se-

cure a conveyance to reach the shore before the more experienced travelers. She had a deadly dread of automobiles, but of course that was the most certain way of leaving Mr. Dacy behind and warning Mrs. Wayne.

The weather had turned slightly colder after the storm, and there would be a cheery fire in the old fireplace, and—smoke! If she could only get there in time to erase all evidence of occupancy, or at the worst assume the care of the place under a written order and help Mrs. Wayne to remain personally in the background! She concluded that would be best; for the stay of Mr. Dacy would be brief, a day perhaps, and it would be easy to manage secrecy for a day.

She was all aglow with her little plans to help the woman who had helped her. To the man with Mr. Dacy she gave little heed, only noting that he was a stranger, middle-aged, stout, with a heavy face and dark, restless eyes, extremely well dressed, and very much bored. He grumbled about the quality of the whiskey in the highball he had drunk before lunch, and brought forth a silver flask of which he was generous in his desire that Mr. Dacy sample the contents.

"It won't do, Wayne," said the latter, shaking his head, "this is our Sunday school route, and I have to travel over it other days with your aunt, who is continually on the prohibition ticket. You 'd better cut it out until we get in the open, and if there is nothing in the house to eat that flask may be a life preserver."

Hettie fastened a veil over the simple little hat Monica had found for her, and as the train slowed up she was already at the car door, a suitcase in her hand, waiting nervously to step to the platform at the first possible moment.

"Shapely little filly," remarked the gentleman with Mr. Dacy, and shrugged at the quick gesture of reproof lest the girl hear.

"Oh, the national flower—'touch-me-not!'—" he observed, with careless good humor. "A man would need to get acclimated again to that sort traveling alone."

Mr. Dacy reminded him of the former reference to the "Sunday school route," and added that the girl might hear.

The girl did hear, but stood rigid, not turning lest Mr. Dacy recognize her even through the veil—a rather unlikely possibility, as she had been employed by his wife but for a short time, and had come but slightly to his notice. When gentlemen went down to the little cabin in the cove, her grandfather had kept her as much as possible in the background.

She had a slight wonder that Mr. Dacy was abroad with a man who spoke thus, though of course she knew that gentlemen out in fishing parties were rather free sometimes, and of course if it was Mr. Dacy's nephew—

It never occurred to her that it might be Mrs. Wayne's husband who lived abroad, and of whom no

one must ask a question in the Dacy household. All knew there was some scandal, and that the Dacys were humiliated by it, and devoted to his girl wife, and beyond that Hettie knew nothing. She had mentally pictured the man as a very satanic-looking creature, very dark and sinister, clothed in black, and wearing diamond scarfpin, studs, and sleeve links, and eyes ever restless, glittering like his own jewels.

Some such fancy was in her girlish mind, and the careless, flirtatious man with the smile and the bored expression did not at all fit the picture. He looked like any stout, well-fed, prosperous man, who had perhaps taken a drink too much; and after the years of life with her grandfather she knew that such things could happen with even good men.

So, with a frightened, fast-beating heart, she trusted herself to an automobile at the station, and giving the name of the road to the chauffeur, was whirled swiftly through the town and out to the far shore, looking back occasionally to see if by any chance there was another machine in sight; but her thoughts were all of Mr. Dacy, his companion was not even remembered.

She breathed a sigh of relief as she reached the cottage, and telling the chauffeur to wait, fairly ran up the path and into the open door. Monica stood there smiling and looking out past her to the waiting car.

"What a flitting fairy you are!" she said, reaching

for a purse in a cabinet drawer. "Did you spend all your pennies and hold the car waiting for toll?"

"Oh, no! It is Mr. Dacy—on the same train! He did not see me, but he is coming to learn the damage done by the storm, so—he will come here too—and I thought—perhaps—"

"You thought perhaps I would need a waiting chariot in case I wanted to avoid him," suggested Monica, as the girl hesitated. "Well, I don't think I mind Uncle Dacy, so pay your man and come in. You have been a good, faithful little helper."

Hettie did as she was bidden, but wondered a little at Mrs. Wayne's sudden change of feeling as to utter privacy; and while she put aside her traveling clothes and made tea, Monica looked over the mail she had brought, noting with a smile two envelopes with the writing of Sargent. How determined he had been to find her, and how wonderful, wonderful the finding had been!

As Hettie voiced her own dread of what the hurricane might have meant to Mrs. Wayne, the latter simply stated that her boat had been destroyed in it, which was no doubt a trifle as compared with other tragedies along the shore. No, the hurricane had brought her no losses.

Then, opening one of the envelopes on which was the stamp of a religious sisterhood in Manhattan, she uttered a little cry of surprise and delight. She had

supposed it some appeal for charity, and it proved to be a letter from Doña Carmel, now a lay sister in a Spanish convent or shelter for homeless girls in New York. Her vocation had taken her to Mexico, then to Cuba, and now, after many changes, she was near her little Querida, whose happiness she prayed for.

The eyes of her "Querida" were wet with tears at the fondness showing through the lines, and as to the prayers—the changes had surely been many, and the years had been long, but it had come at last—the happiness!

"I have brought you good news?" ventured Nettie, noting the smile, the tears, and the smiles again.

"Yes, it is dear news, happy news," replied Monica, as she slipped the two unopened envelopes under the surplice of her waist—the two letters not to be opened except when alone. "All the world seems full of happy news, and look at the wonderful sunlight on the water! The glow there is like a promise that there will never be storms again."

She was sipping her tea and gazing out over the water where, only an hour before, Sargent had sailed north into what looked like a rosy sea of gladness. All the glamor of those wonderful storm-bound hours was over her, and the low sun lit up sea and sky as if touched by the glory of the love days.

How narrow all the life she had lived without knowing joy beyond the desire for work well done! How selfish that seemed to her now—her own work.

But to be a part of the work *he* might do, to be a part of the life he must live, that was as if the very skies had opened and closed her into sanctuary — with him!

That Love had been their only priest was not a matter of which she even thought, unless in joy that thus the world and all thought of the world was shut out beyond the boundaries of the mighty elements. In a little while, a very little while, the world could know, and they could walk openly hand in hand; yet, while she treasured the thought, she was so sure that no sanction of the world would ever make her more the other half of his life than their love vows under the fury and harmony of the mighty tempest. It had been as if the hurricane had folded curtains of secrecy around their enchanted walls.

And Dacy had come! It was just as well; she need be hidden from no one now since the one man had found her, and claimed her, and made her queen as only Love can!

Alone in her bedchamber she opened and read the two letters — one containing the card on which she had written the brief message for Mrs. Dacy, and what a mad, jubilant, imploring letter it was! The other was more brief, telling her how useless it was to hide herself, since he looked forward to a long life-time, and all of it would be given to the one search if need be.

There was a letter from Hallet informing her that he had rushed the application for divorce; in fact, he

had made all preparations in the summer with the hope that she would some day ask just that service from him. He would like, of course, to know where she was, and when they might hope to see her again; but her action in leaving met with his approval, for otherwise the Dacys might have tried to influence her, making her at least temporarily unhappy, and even Mr. Wayne—

She did not care in the least to read what the Dacys and Mr. Wayne might try to do. They seemed to belong to a life she had lived ages ago, and she put the letter aside, and slipped the other two back into her bosom as if to keep the thought of the one man close—close in a tangible way. She had walked so long in the very shadow of his thought, and the avowal of it was so sweet, and new, and strange, that it would seem less like a wonderful dream if she had his written words there on her breast.

She was going down to tell Hettie of Doña Carmel, and the home for girls where she could be placed a while, a little while—dear Doña Carmel, who had shielded her own girlhood as best she knew! Then, after a brief season, another home might be arranged —of that other home she dared not speak as yet; but the thought of it was sweet beyond words, and she had for Hettie the protective feeling earned by right of benefits conferred. Ah! there were such beautiful years to be lived, and a wonderful home to be made —somewhere? And the little stray who was so shy

would have a little niche in it. Monica was too much absorbed by her own thoughts to give special thought to anyone, but after the awakening to the artistic possibilities of Hettie as a model, it was made easy to include her in the vague love-lit dreams of the future; she would fit into any background without discord, and was such a fragile little blossom of a girl that it gave one a feeling of strength to make plans for her.

Monica's own life in its shock of joy, and its glory in the days to be, felt generous to all the world, so sure now that there was a joyous castle of dreams to come true for everyone if only a little help was given!

Dreaming thus, she came slowly down the stairway, halting at the window for a moment to gaze out over the deep blue of the sea, not yet smooth, for the rollers were carrying white crests, and they sounded wicked as they crashed thunderously against the great rocks.

But the sun had come out with a glory of reflected lights, and the autumn leaves on the low-growing wild things were splashes of rich color against the line of blue water. Over that sparkle of the blue he had sailed north to the village, where the boat had been secured for his secret search of her. No one along the shore would know that a strange craft had anchored thus long in her little cove. Even the fishermen, seeing it there, had supposed it her own, made snug and safe from the storm.

As she looked the way he had gone she breathed a sigh of utter content and touched his letters against

her breast. In a little while, a very little while, she would be held again in his arms, she would hear—

She went on down the stairs, smiling. The tinkle of china told her Hettie was arranging supper, and a dimple deepened in her cheek at the certainty that Hettie would conclude a tremendous appetite in the mistress of the home. The larder she had stocked before leaving was sadly depleted.

But Hettie could never know that one cup and plate was put aside from common use as a holy thing of sacrament—his cup from which they had each drank in pledge! All the world had been changed for her by that pledge, the joyous, wonderful world!

Through the window she saw a man sauntering along the cliff, a stranger who looked down at the white lines of foam against the beach or the dark rocks. No doubt people would begin now to patrol the shore because of wreckage washing back and forth.

She gave the stroller no further thought until Hettie came in hurriedly from the veranda, her big eyes wide—hesitating, embarrassed, yet someway afraid.

"It is a man—he was on the train—he saw me—and—and is coming in!"

"Hettie, Hettie," said Mrs. Wayne, smilingly, "a man saw you on the train, and is actually coming in. Then, perhaps," she added, teasingly, "you had better let me ask his intentions."

Hettie, abashed at the raillery, and with an uncomfortable feeling as she remembered his comment on

her figure, went to the door with lagging steps and silent tongue. Even when she opened the door she only held it ajar in a hesitating way, waiting for the man to declare his business.

But he only bestowed on her an amused glance, and, placing his hand against the door, pushed it wide open and walked past her.

So quiet had been his entrance that he was standing, smiling, and self-satisfied, in the archway, while Monica on the window seat was still waiting to hear the voice of the stranger at the door.

For a heavy man he moved very softly, and his smile widened as he saw Monica rise to her feet in amazed protest against the slightly swaggering entrance of a stranger.

"Well, Monica?" he remarked, easily.

She stepped backward, staring at him in horror, while Hettie, following him, was poised as for flight.

Mr. Wayne looked from one to the other grimly.

"Not an ardent greeting," he observed. "Run away, little girl, and play," he added, turning to Hettie, who looked in vain for a gesture from Mrs. Wayne, and, seeing none, shrank back into the dining room.

"To put it mildly, your regard is not flattering," he said, crossing to a chair and dropping into it heavily. "One would think I had changed as much as you, but in a different way."

She still stood with that perplexed stare as at a

stranger. Even his voice was changed and husky, and came from a fat throat in which there was not a line left of his one-time grace. His dark, restless eyes seemed smaller because of the extra flesh, and his face was mottled with the signs of the opposite of simple life. The small hand in which he held hat and cigar looked puffy and strange for a man of his bulk. There was no trace of the man to whom she had turned freely in her childhood. Neither girl nor child would go with trust to this man.

"Gad, they were right; you are a looker!" he decided, as his gaze traveled from her face over her figure and back to her eyes. "I'm back for keeps, and you can spend my money. So settle down, girlie, and talk it over. Why the devil didn't some of them write me long ago and tell me what a beauty you were? The foolishness of ever trying to get divorced from *you!*"

Monica felt herself shrink and burn under his appraising eyes.

"You must go away," she heard herself saying, in a low, shocked tone. "You must go at once; don't look at me like that, you—you are insulting!"

"Now, now, now," he said, soothingly, "be good and listen. We don't need the lawyers for this—not you and I. You used to have a lot of 'savy' for a kid—little fighting wildcat—but I tell you I give in. You can have everything your own way; make your own terms. Why—with your looks and my money—"

"Stop!" she cried, sharply. "Are you trying to buy a woman in the market-place, and lost your way?"

"Little wildcat!" he repeated, smilingly. "Yes, I know I did not play a square game, and your pride was hurt, but I tell you I am back to eat out of your hand, and—"

"*Ugh!*" and she held out her hand and looked at it. "I should hate my own hand if you touched it!"

"Bad as that?" and his smile was not nice. "All right then, no hand-holding in the game, and we will settle it on a business basis. I come back, buy you a town and country house, a string of horses—you used to be keen on horses—and a yacht; they tell me you are keen on boating now. You invite the guests, your own choice, and I will foot the bills. You keep your own apartments, and I double cross my heart to be a respectful guest. How is that? I want a house on this side of the water. I can't have it without a woman, and you are the right woman. By jove! I never even dreamed you could develop into what you are. I've been a fool!"

"You are a greater one now!" she said, coldly. "My lawyer has filed application for absolute divorce, and you will be free to give all your money, and your name, to the one woman who has given the best years of her life to you."

"Nothing doing!" he returned, briefly. "I tell you I want to come to this side, and she can't come back. Even her own folks would bar her out. Have some

sense, Monica; a man can't mend things a woman breaks — even a wedding ring can't do it."

"You brute!" she breathed, in utter disgust. "You would make the woman pay, pay, while you would come back and buy a place for yourself alone."

"Oh, I will make a settlement on her, so you need n't worry about the other woman," he assured her, easily; "also she has quarreled with me, and quit. These are the things I wanted to talk over without lawyers, and I was in luck to run up here with Dacy. He told me the house was closed. Now be a wise girl, think over the money you will need to run things, and let Hallet know. Consult him about it first if you choose; he is a good deal of a prude, but he will see it is the only way to settle things. Now be sensible, and don't stare at me as if I was one of your Mexican lovers you were itching to knife."

"I have listened to you," she said, coldly. "Listen to me, for I will never talk with you again."

"Oh, yes you will, Monica!"

"*Don't* call me Monica!" she burst out with a sort of fury at the sound of her name on his lips. "You fill me with a disgust I once thought I could never have for you! I thought I was merely indifferent, as I used to be, but I find, I find that I could hate you more than I could ever have hated the Mexicans you sneer at! Oh, you beast! to come like this for traffic in the life of one woman after throwing aside another!"

"Easy, easy!" he said, and his lips were white. "Remember, you are my wife."

"You mean you married me!" she retorted. "That alone does not make me a wife. You make a bargain with me—with a child—and then in a drunken hour you tried to break it, and I ran away! I have never told your family of that, or how you found me and promised to send me to the school I chose if only I would not make a scandal, and make you a laughing stock! But I *will* tell them, if you ever come near me again. I fought you then, and I'll fight you now!"

"Not now," and he looked her over with a slow, malicious smile. "You have your claws clipped now, my lady. You had better be good and play ball, for your little penny whistle divorce machine has slipped a cog—it's all off."

He was so slow, so watchful, so sure, that she turned suddenly cold with terror of the unknown.

"It is not true!" she breathed, watching him fearfully, her hand over the letters on her breast as if to hold the writer more close. The ugly smile in Wayne's eyes made her sick. He was white with a sort of cold fury, and the brandy from the silver flask aroused in him possibilities hidden usually under his careless indifference to most things. But he was not indifferent now. She had stung him into a white rage, and he watched the color slip from her face, and smiled.

"It—is—not?" And this time there was almost a plea in her broken tone—"I have George Hallet's letter—he said—"

"Yes, no doubt," and he lit his cigar, threw the match in the fire, and picked up his hat; "but when your perfect lady of a lawyer wrote you that letter he did not know that you meant to nullify the divorce action by coming to the shore to meet your husband."

"Nullify? Coming to meet *you!*" she gasped.

"Precisely; our presence together under this roof has wiped the divorce action in New York off the slate."

"*No!* You are saying that to—to frighten me. It is not true—or if it is, I will apply again, here—in this state."

"In this state?" and his smile grew more sardonic. "In this state you would have no grounds for divorce. I have repeatedly sent money for your maintenance. The fact that you ignore it does not alter the law in the case. In this state only my failure to provide for you would allow you a divorce."

She seemed to feel the world of her dreams slipping far into the shadows as she leaned white and tense against the table, staring at his smiling, insolent face.

"It is not true! It is not true!" she insisted. "I will go somewhere, I will find a way, I will—"

"You will do nothing of the kind," he interrupted. "You just mentioned that crazy flight of yours from the Los Angeles hotel. I'd forgotten the bad hour

or two you gave me. You have spoiled your case by reminding me of it. I will fight any attempt you make for divorce, so you had better be good. You have no case on desertion, for you deserted me the day after our wedding. I can prove that if I want to."

"But, but, you promised—it was understood—"

"Nonsense! No judge would believe your story that the marriage was not a marriage, or that the intent was not marriage. People don't do those foolish things. You would be laughed at," and he smiled down in her frightened eyes. "Do you see now where you stand? You are my wife and you are going to remain my wife!" He grasped her wrist with a quick, vicious movement, drawing her face closer to his. "I did not give a damn one way or the other for you personally in this matter," he stated, watching her with half-closed, devouring eyes, "but you've changed that. You are mine, and I'm going to have you! I was a fool to let you go that other time, and it shan't happen again. No matter what the price I pay, I am going to have you! Do you understand?"

When Hettie heard the door slam, she came in and found that Mrs. Wayne had slipped to the floor beside the window seat. With her chin resting on her hands she was gazing northward over the sea.

The girl thought at first that she was weeping, and stood, pitiful and hesitating, for Wayne's last words had been loud enough for her to hear.

But Monica was not weeping. Her eyes were dry

and cold, and her face was pale as she turned at the girl's entrance.

"We will go away tomorrow, Hettie," she said, quietly. "I will leave you with a dear woman in New York for a while, and afterwards we can make plans; but—I am going out of this world, this prison of beastly laws—tomorrow!"

"Oh, Mrs. Wayne!" began the girl, in terror at the white face and the hard, strange words; but Monica smiled at her faintly.

"No, don't be worried," she said, reassuringly. "I did not tell you that I was near drowning in the storm the day you left, and that I came out of the surf into a new life in a new world. I will make that new world for myself, and—we will go away tomorrow."

Later, Hettie slipped out to look over the cliff for the boat, but only shattered timbers were strewn along the shore. She was filled with awe at the thought that a woman, alone, had gone under that water and come out alive, but in the face of Mrs. Wayne's silence dared ask no questions.

She did, however, comprehend that the cove was as the very jaws of death in a tempest, and that anyone going under those waves could actually feel that the old life was lived out—and left behind!

CHAPTER XVI

THE long, beautiful autumn had merged into the season of furs and flurries of snow, and the holidays were past, and Glyndon Wayne had drifted from Massachusetts to Florida and back to Manhattan, without making any headway as to establishing himself on an American country estate; and to his disgust and chagrin his own relatives showed no great eagerness to assist him. Even Mrs. Dacy, despite all her loyalty to family, found him an awkward guest.

He was ignored in clubs, and Dacy, after hearing his side of the question, made it clear that, while his other business could remain in their office, neither he nor Hallet would consider any proposition towards a compromise with Monica — when they found her.

For she seemed, indeed, to have faded out of their world, and all his efforts to locate her failed. He had attorneys endeavor to ascertain if she had established residence in California or Nevada with the idea of trying there for the divorce he had spoiled for her in New York; but no trace of her was found. He could give them little to identify her by except her name. She had closed her studio. Rosa remained in charge, but all of Wayne's money could not bribe

Rosa to tell where her mistress was if she had known, which she did not.

In fact, only one quiet, little girl in all Manhattan could have told them aught of the absentee; and Hettie felt very important at this evidence of trust, and periodically went, with a certain excitement, to the studio for Monica's mail, always veiled, lest she be seen by any of the Dacy or Wayne connections.

And it was through that slender, veiled figure that the spies employed by Wayne secured the first trace to what might be the retreat of Monica. Everyone calling at the studio was watched until proven uninteresting; but a slender, veiled girl who never spoke except to Rosa, who came regularly, and who was followed each time to the home of a Spanish sisterhood — this was the first item they could report to which any significance could be attached.

And their report threw Glyndon Wayne into a perfect fury of rage.

A convent! a Spanish convent! Of course, if she should go to any it would be a Spanish one. He had never thought of that, yet the thought, once suggested, grew and had plenty to feed upon, and he stormed into Dacy's office and expressed himself.

"Right here under your noses!" he fumed. "Of course, with that damned church painting, and her Spanish, she would have a pull and get in where she thinks no one dare follow. But she will find her

mistake. What is money for if it can't open gates? Let me once be sure she is there, and I'll—"

"Stop and think it over," suggested Dacy. "Suppose your wife is there, suppose she elects to spend the rest of her days there doing church decorations, do you think you could find a lawyer of good standing to give you either aid or comfort towards getting her out? Hallet has your record, you know, and he would fight for her if she was back of bars double-locked and never to be opened."

"Hallet's a fool, and will die a pauper," prophesied Wayne, darkly.

"Perhaps," agreed Hallet's partner, "but he would see to it that you got considerable publicity of the wrong sort. Can't you see that if that sisterhood is, for any reason, sheltering her, your record would not show up very well in the public press as an opponent of the church? And there would be a very great deal of press work, Wayne. It isn't often the reporters get such rich material. The things they would do to you would be many, and you'd better go and talk it over with your Aunt Martha."

"Talk—hell! I'll go to that greaser shebang and see for myself. These fools have wasted weeks and a barrel of money, and the girl right here under their noses!" Then he stopped short and regarded Dacy scowlingly. "Are you dead sure your own folks, your office, has not known where she is?"

"No, I can't speak for anyone but myself," acknowledged Dacy. "I certainly do not know, but I should not be at all surprised if you are right, and if she is there, you might as well give up; you will not dare do a thing."

"I'll dare find out without any more agents in the case," retorted Wayne, "and I'll do it now. You can come along if you want to," he added, in a half-resentful, half-challenging manner.

Dacy hesitated the fraction of a second, and then reached for his hat.

"Unofficially I am willing to be among those present," he said, amiably, and a little later he was being whirled uptown in Wayne's car. The latter looked a trifle surprised at his acceptance of the invitation. He had been made conscious that even good-natured, easy-going Dacy usually had business which prevented acceptance of so small a courtesy as a car ride.

The machine slowed up before one of the old residences in a one-time region of fashion. A metal fence enclosed the old hedge of the yard, and the ivy over the little metal balcony fluttered its green leaves in the face of winter.

The silver nameplate on the door assured them of their destination, but before Wayne could ring, the door was opened by an aged nun seated in a great chair in the hall as if ever on guard. She was very small, dark, and entirely Spanish, and she listened politely

while Wayne made his statement in English that he would like the favor of speech with the Superior.

"*Si, Señores,*" she said, and preceded them to the reception room, where she left them and rustled along the hall.

Both men looked about the room with unusual interest, the inlaid floor and finely-carved marble of the mantel gave an air of old-time magnificence with which the black carved furniture was in satisfying harmony. Some old Spanish canvases gave color here and there —A Madonna, with drooping face and a wonderful blue robe, and the Divine Shepherd, with a white lamb nestling close to the sheltering breast. Occasionally the voices of women could be heard as a door opened above, and each listened, in the silence of the room, for the tones of a voice they knew.

But they did not speak to each other. The atmosphere of the place was such an entire change from the bustle and rush and noise of the streets, that it called for a certain readjustment, and Dacy leaned back and eyed Wayne in silence, wondering grimly how he would fit himself to meet the situation.

Then there was heard again the soft rustle, and the aged nun settled herself in the throne-like chair in the hall, and a younger woman, with clear eyes and a sweet, alert expression, entered, inclining her head slightly as she glanced at Wayne, and then spoke to Dacy.

"Sister Aguada speaks no English," she said, with a

gesture towards the guard in the hall, "and our Mother, the Superior, is not here to see you at this hour, but I will listen."

"This gentleman, Mr. Wayne, thinks his wife is here, in retreat," and Dacy stepped back with a plain indication that he spoke to her through courtesy, but that Wayne should do his own talking.

"Your wife, *Señor?*" and her brows went up in amused surprise. "But this—our house is not a retreat for wives, not at all!"

Wayne felt that she was laughing at him despite her cool courtesy, and the color flamed in his face.

"There is a girl here, or a woman, who leaves this house, veiled, every week and goes to my wife's studio on Fifty-seventh street. This has continued for many weeks. I have reason to believe that girl is my wife, and I want to see her."

"How strange, *Señor,* that you have a wife, and go to seek her away from your home," she said, coldly. "It is quite true this is a shelter for the homeless girls, and there is one who goes veiled at times. She is the friend, the protegé of Sister Teresa. It may be that Sister Teresa can see Mr. Wayne when I have told her what you say. It may be, but I do not know."

And with a frigid bend of the head she turned away without looking at either of them, and, speaking a few low words in Spanish to the nun in the hall, she passed out of their sight. Dacy glanced at Wayne, who looked after her, frowningly, his head thrust forward, his jaw

set in an ugly way, and his whole attitude indicating that his impulse was to follow and find what he came for.

"Think it over, and think it slow," suggested Dacy. "This looks like one place where you have to take what they give you and look pleasant, if you can."

Wayne was not in the mood for pleasantries, but he did straighten up as the frank, cool nun returned, followed by another, with older eyes, dark and sad, and a strange, intent gaze as she turned to Dacy, and then to the other man, who made a choking sound in his throat and involuntarily stepped back as if he had seen a ghost.

Sister Teresa did not bend her head or salute him in any way; in fact, her head was held very high, and the strange look in her eyes seemed to come from above him and judge him.

"Ah, the *Señor* Wayne?" she said at last. "And you come to seek all that you cared not to guard?"

"Doña Carmel!" he muttered, staring.

"There is no longer any Doña Carmel, and there is no one in this house who wishes to know you, *Señor.*"

"But, Carmel, listen, listen to me!" he said, hurriedly taking a step towards her, and becoming more eager as she moved backward from him. "You don't believe in divorce, you can't—your religion is against it. You are just the person to set her right. Why, it is a duty you can't ignore, and you can have anything you want to ask. Your Order can have any-

thing you want to ask," and he glanced at the younger nun to see the effect of his words, "an endowment, a building, anything!"

He stopped to give her a chance to speak, but she only looked at him as if, like Monica, she was trying to trace the careless, graceful visitor of San Juan in the stodgy, dissipated man, whose voice held no note she could recall.

"Why, you saw us married," he went on. "You know how all right it is; you could influence her, make her see what the duty of a wife is, and I'll make any settlement, anything you say, any—"

She lifted her hands with a little outward gesture of putting away from her an unpleasant thing.

"All that I say, *Señor* Wayne?" she repeated. "Then I say that you give back to her the clean heart of the child you made promise to guard! Yes, *Señor,* I see you married with her, and I hear that promise; also I thought in that time that it was well. I myself told her it was best—my poor, little, alone Querida! I am to blame, too, always, that I tell her it was best, for her life is broke and her heart is broke! Yes, *Señor,* I dress her to marry with you, and she sends back to me there in California the dress your drunk hands have tore from her body that time she run away! All this I know, and I ask you what you can give to me, or to our Order, to make me say again the word for her to live beside you? What gift is there for her when she has the tired soul and the broke heart at

twenty-two years? You will please now to go, *Señor;* there is not anyone in this home who belongs with you! This house of shelter, and many houses of shelter, are filled with such girl children as she was—whose lives are broke by men like you!"

Dacy and the younger nun stood astounded, while Sister Teresa poured out her stinging words of censure, and without a further glance at any of them she passed from the room.

Wayne seemed to crumple down into his clothes at her arraignment; then, recollecting himself, he shrugged his shoulders and tried to smile, but it was rather a ghastly attempt.

"A lot of talent wasted under that habit," he observed, cynically, and turned to the other nun, who stood waiting. "Perhaps tomorrow I could see your Superior?"

"I do not think so," she said, without lifting her eyes. "The door is open for you, *Señores.*"

Dacy never quite knew how he got out of that room where the young nun stood with averted eyes under the picture of the Shepherd, or how he passed the aged nun who held the door open in silence. But he found himself outside with tears in his eyes, his face convulsed, and his hands clenching with the murderous anger of a good-natured, seldom-aroused man.

"You, you——," he said, glaring at Wayne, but words failed him.

"Oh, you are an easy gallery to play to," and

Wayne tried to assume a contemptuous superiority as he buttoned his coat and nodded his head over his shoulder towards the door. "Why, I could tell you things about that woman, Doña Carmelita—"

"Go down those steps!" ordered Dacy, with tears of pure rage and humiliation fairly choking him.

"Why, say, old man—"

"And go alone, damn you!"

Wayne gave him one look, frowning, incredulous, and then walked down the steps. He looked harried, beaten, and disgusted as he dropped into the car and gave the curt order, "Hotel."

Dacy stood, the tears unheeded on his cheeks, though one or two passers-by looked at him curiously. He wanted to go back and speak to those wonderful women, but he scarcely knew how to go about it. That locked door, with its watchful guardian back of it, would not be easily passed again by him, and after Wayne's car had turned the corner he went slowly down the steps and home to Martha.

He knew he had turned out of their office their wealthiest client, and that in a business way he had made a bad day of it; also it would be difficult to convey to anyone the influence he had acted under.

He did not know that he would even try. He wanted to forget it.

But the thought of Monica, with her six years of silence and her bravery, came up before him as a vision, and struck at his heart. Her strange smile as she had

listened to all their endeavors at reconciliation, her shocked protest at the thought of little Lulu, all that the words of Sister Teresa had suggested—the bruised, silent, lonely life, and "the broke heart at twenty-two of my poor, little, alone Querida!"

He felt as when, a chubby little boy, the big world had brought some hurt to him, and he had wanted to go away alone to cry over it. He could never even tell Monica what he knew or how he felt. Monica—who had listened to their lectures and smiled at them, smiled down upon them as upon sheltered children! Monica, whom they had deemed ungirlish and cold, cold—when her life, for very shame, had been of forced restraint and silence—what blind fools she must have thought them!

And when a few days later all the Glyndon Wayne business was transferred from their office to a rival firm, Dacy could not feel properly regretful for even the business loss.

He wrote a little letter to Monica in care of Sister Teresa, and enclosed in it a newspaper clipping concerning an outgoing steamer. Glyndon Wayne's name was among the passengers sailing for Italy.

CHAPTER XVII

THEN one day Rosa was able to tell him that "Miss Mona" was coming home—letters were to be held for her; but beyond that no one was told anything, and there were many curious minds.

Mrs. Smythe-Orville, who had gained entrance to a coveted social circle by the "dog route"—strengthened and bulwarked by certain clubs at which Nell Mitford had laughed, came back from Washington, where Lulu had been taken on the arrival of Glyndon Wayne in New York.

She had decided that he was frightfully unpopular, and that her own success depended on not knowing him—in America.

Of course, if affairs on this side should not turn out well—

So Lulu, glowing with joy over the return, was the very first to run in with a welcome for Monica, following the expressman with a hamper, and Lulu receipted for it at Rosa's request, rather than disturb her mistress.

"Aren't you awfully glad your Miss Mona is home?" she asked, gleefully. "We are all within reach of each other again. Mrs. Tony Allen is just back from her elopement trip!"

"By her ownself?" queried Maum Rosa, pointedly, and Lulu giggled.

"No; they are still living together, after three whole months of matrimony! All the folks will be in today. Where is Nell's portrait? Let me put it on the easel so it will look just as it did when she stepped off the model stand to run away."

Rosa humored her whim, and found the canvas, while Lulu sat on the willow trunk and noticed the labels, old and new, pasted over it.

"Where is Pine Level, Alabama, Rosa?" she asked, noting the latest.

"Pine Level? Why, Pine Level is where the boat from Miss Mona's place lands at the first railroad, fifteen miles away."

"Fifteen miles from a railroad! No wonder she calls it 'The Hermitage.' So that's where she has been?"

Rosa did not reply, but stared at the trunk doubtfully as she selected the key for it.

"Where you see Pine Level on that?" she finally asked.

"There; can't you read it?" asked Lulu, with no thought of possible educational lapses in the Georgia pines.

"*Um,*" grunted Maum Rosa, noncommittally. "I never could read printin' very good, but that tab maybe a year old?"

"No, only three days. Can't you read figures?"

"Yes 'm," said Rosa, unfastening the hasp.

Lulu fidgeted from one window to the other, impatiently.

"Is Mrs. Wayne sleeping?" she asked at last.

"She 's lying down. I reckon, Miss Lulu, you 'd better call in later. You may have quite a wait."

"I — I would," returned Lulu, still peering down into the street, "but I asked Mr. Dacy to meet me here, Mr. Joe, and —"

A ring at the bell interrupted her, and she ran to the hall ahead of Rosa and opened the door.

"Oh, Joe!" she whispered, "did you get the new position?"

"Sure thing," said that laconic gentleman, twiddling his hat, and smiling at her in ardent unexpressed devotion.

"Joe! How much a year?"

Joe held up six fingers and kept on smiling.

"Does that mean six dollars," she demanded, "or fifteen hundred?"

"Fifteen a week, and promise of a raise."

"Oh, Joe, is n't it lovely?"

"It 's all right if the raise is big enough, and comes soon enough!"

Lulu refused to consider any possibility but a wonderful raise as soon as the firm had time really to grasp the great value of Joe, and, of course, that meant an early date; and Joe smiled at the radiant hopes of

her, and got as much joy out of it as if he already had the extra pay envelope.

"Monica is resting and we can't see her now. Let's go somewhere and talk," she suggested. But Joe looked at his watch and shook his head.

"Not this day, office hours in ten minutes, forty blocks away—so long!" and the tall boy shook her hand and fairly ran for the elevator. To be the smallest cog in a wheel of big machinery was filling Joe with the responsibilities of life.

Lulu breathed an impatient sigh. It was horrid not to be able to earn money and enjoy oneself at the same time. But the sight of Monica coming through the music room, almost made her forget her disappointment as she rushed into her arms.

"Oh, Monica dear! I'm the first to say 'welcome home.'"

Monica greeted her and took up the little tray of accumulated mail, glancing over the envelopes and opening a few.

"I hear you also have been out of town," she observed.

"In Washington," assented Lulu, with a little clasp of the hands, expressive of delight. "Lovely! Mr. Sargent came there last week. How he was lionized! Do you know his *Twilight Woman* has been translated already into—I forget how many languages. Spanish and German I'm sure of. Oh, I've lots of news. Nell is back, and Tony; and Gillie has a new note-

book—all about me. Joe is working like a *slave*—fifteen dollars a week! That doesn't seem big to some folks, but I'd marry him on that tomorrow, only mama would do all the law would let her—and laws are awful things!"

"Little Anarchist!" said Monica, teasingly, and then, suddenly grave, she added, "Lulu, wait! It is not so long until you will be of legal age."

"Wait nearly two years!" protested Lulu, dolefully. "It's easy to see *you* never were in love. You are as bad—I mean as sensible—as Mr. Sargent."

"To be as sensible as your Mr. Sargent is high praise," agreed Monica, with the little mocking smile which Lulu found adorable, though she did not always understand it. "What particular brand of wisdom has he expressed lately?"

"Oh, we got off by ourselves at a tea last week, and I told him all about Joe, and—and mama!" she added, viciously, "and he gave me a lot of good advice—talked to me like a grandfather."

Monica absently sorted some of the mail, and opened a note from Hettie stating that she was coming at once with Sister Teresa. Then she looked up from the written page to ask, "What did he advise, Lulu?"

"Told me to wait," confessed Lulu, with an injured air, "unless I wanted unhappiness for myself and remorse for Joe. Told me I was too young to understand all the reasons, but that I must not meet Joe secretly as I have been doing. Oh, he had me crying

before he got through. He said secrecy was not always romantic, and sometimes it was demoralizing."

"What a curious statement from a novelist," observed Monica. "I thought secrecy was part of their stock in trade."

And Lulu wished she could say something to make Monica like Mr. Sargent better, yet did not dare express herself, as she was rather in awe of both of them.

Rosa came in with a special delivery letter, and Lulu took her departure, after a warning of the stampede there would be when the word went out that the studio door was actually open.

Monica walked to the window to open the letter, and her eyes softened at an intimate term of endearment, and the eager restlessness of the writer to be near her again.

" . . . It will be very soon—as soon as I dare. We each have so many things to consider—and people. My sister is here in Washington, and that has detained me a few days. Her husband has been appointed Consul to an oriental post and our mother is going with her for a year. I hope you will consult Hallet the earliest possible hour concerning the divorce. It can certainly be arranged now without further interference. Your letter has a sad tone I do not understand. Has even this brief separation made you morbid? Please cheer up, and keep a light in the window for me! Don't be surprised to have me ring

you up at any hour. And what is the unwritten thing you have to tell me? I am counting the hours until I can be with you. Are you?"

Rosa, having removed some of the heavier things from the willow trunk, was about to move it, but hesitated, and made many trips to and from the clothes closets, her fond, questioning eyes on her mistress at every turn. That letter seemed of vast importance, for Monica was too abstracted to note anything about her, until Rosa, with a disappointed sigh, picked up the trunk and attracted her attention.

"Maum Rosa," she said, hesitatingly, "I do not think — that is — you need not send that trunk to the storeroom; I may need it."

"Now, Miss Mona!" sighed Rosa, in an aggrieved way, "you ain't a-goin' away again, is you?"

"I — may," acknowledged Monica.

"An' jest got back? I reckon I go along next time?" she added, hopefully.

"I can't quite say; it will take time to arrange," and Monica turned away her head rather than see the anxious, strained look in the eyes of the old woman.

"Miss Mona," she said, pleadingly, "why you put me aside like an ole wore out ox? You ain't tellin' me you been down at the old homestead — an' it's marked on this here trunk! How you make out to live there 'thout me along? Five miles to a town, two miles to a neighbor house, no white folks of quality anywhere

around! Miss Mona, why could n't I go 'long to look after you?"

"I — was not there but a little while," said Monica, evasively. "I did miss you very much."

"Well, that 's something," conceded Rosa, wiping her eyes with her apron, "but 'tain't all. You 're troubled in your mind a heap, Miss Mona, an' that jest worries me. I heered you a-walkin' that floor nigh all night long. I — I reckon it 's all along o' that married business?" she added, wistfully.

"Suppose I should tell you some day that I was going to be really married?" and Monica tried to smile lightly at the thought and, making a failure of it, turned suddenly grave, "or — that I am married?"

Maum Rosa's eyes were round with wonder.

"Again? Miss Mona!"

"No!" burst out Monica, vehemently, as she arose hastily and began pacing the floor in a fever of nervousness; "the only marriage! Don't remind me of that other horror.

"But, Miss Mona, how you ever get married if you don't recollect it long enough to get unmarried first? They all pestered you to divorce him, an' you would n't."

"Oh, I did n't know, I did n't know!" breathed Monica, regretfully. "I thought I was right, and — I was sorry for the woman who could love him! If only he would have promised, oh — don't make me think of that mistake, that awful mistake!"

Then she sank into a chair and regarded Rosa, who sighed ponderously and shook her head in sympathy with her Miss Mona's regret.

"But, it is a long time since I went away, Maum Rosa," she said at last, "perhaps time even to be divorced and married again. And suppose, only suppose it could be arranged like that, and—and that I would not want people to know for a whole, a little while?"

She strove to speak lightly, smilingly, but the embarrassment and the eagerness showed in her eyes, and she could not meet the wondering, disapproving gaze of the old nurse.

"I reckon Mr. Hallet is smart enough to fix it up that-a-way unbeknownst in the court house," ventured the old woman, dubiously; "but he—why, he's too fine a gentleman for that, Miss Mona, an' a heap too proud o' you!"

She was puzzling this worrisome problem out so earnestly in her own mind that she did not note the quick flash of anger in the eyes of her mistress, and she continued, conscientiously, "Yes, Miss Mona, he knows that gentlemen don't marry with ladies that-a-way. Some of them—well, some of them—make a heap of trouble for they family by marrien' *folks* that way, but they don't marry ladies."

"Maum Rosa!" cried Monica, sharply, and the devoted old creature was startled by the reproof in her tone, the black hands clasped and unclasped

nervously, and she peered at her mistress in a half-frightened way.

"*Miss Mona!*" she whispered, appealingly, and at the sight of the hurt she had given, Monica patted her shoulder kindly.

"Never mind, dear old Maum Rosa," she said, soothingly, "I am tired, I guess, and—and nervous. But perhaps I will sleep tonight," she added, hopefully, "and feel better."

She went through the music room, and Rosa, watching her disappear in her own bedroom, went about her work with troubled sighs and doleful head shakings. She could not see what she had done to arouse that flash of quick anger in her Miss Mona's eyes.

The telephone bell rang many times, but to all Rosa had to give the same reply—Mistress Wayne was resting and could not be disturbed. Flowers came from Mrs. Allen, who stated that she was coming the next day, rain or shine, and there was a box of fragrant violets from Hamilton Dacy.

Rosa arranged these in water, and gave a good deal of special attention to a box of white roses with which no card came.

"Same sort that came yesterday, an' day before, an' day before that!" she muttered. "Someone certainly did want them here to give her welcome home. I wonder if it *is* Mr. Hallet?"

But later in the day Mr. Hallet sent up cheery pink roses with his card and a kindly message, and Rosa

knew that the white blossoms were the gift of someone else.

Her perplexities were many, and accustomed though she was to diverse types of models, she was more than usually puzzled when Monica made an exception of one caller, and talked for a long time with a nun whom she called Doña Carmelita, though Hettie Craig, who accompanied her, and waited for her in the dining room, spoke of her with admiring awe as "Sister Teresa."

Why Miss Mona wanted the nun when she was not painting, was more than Rosa could understand, and she felt almost an aggrieved jealousy against the soft-voiced foreign woman who caressed her mistress with tender words, and touch, and look, as Rosa had never seen anyone do. And when she took in tea, Monica was seated on a low hassock, with her head on the knees of Sister Teresa, while they talked on and on in the Spanish to which Rosa could never get accustomed.

"Rosa," said Monica, smiling a bit at the wonder of the old nurse, "between the time when you took care of me as a baby, and the time I went back to you married, this lady was my nurse, and mother, and friend. I want her to see you and know I am not all alone."

Rosa made her best curtsey, but Sister Teresa put out her hand.

"Love her and keep her safe, Rosita," she said, in

her pretty accented English. "It is not the little children needing always the most care."

"Yes'm, that's a true word, too!" agreed Maum Rosa, amazed, and flattered by such consideration, and relieved to learn that this visible affection had a solid foundation in the western years. "I—I never heard tell that Miss Mona had a nun lady for a nurse, but since it's that way, and you done found her again, I hope an' pray you can talk her into gettin' foot-loose from that marriage business, and I ask your pardon for sayin' it, too."

"Yes, Rosa, she knows, and she will talk to me of it," said Monica. "Give Hettie tea in the dining room, and find some sewing for her to take home."

Maum Rosa promised, and left the room very much cheered concerning her mistress. Mrs. Dacy was too prejudiced for her advice to be worth much in the eyes of Rosa, and Nell was too flighty, but this woman of charm, who carried with her the atmosphere of a different world, filled her suddenly with confidence. Surely now Miss Mona had a woman friend to whom she would give heed!

And she went out to serve Hettie, and learn all the wonderful things done in a wonderful way by Sister Teresa and her companions.

And in the studio Sister Teresa stroked the hair of Monica and murmured:

"Pray, Querida, and choose the right dream for your life, and in the end all comes to you! Many

wait too long for the right dream, and all comes—very late, and only faith and prayer helps. But to a woman the faith and the prayer must come, or all life is made bitter. Believe this from me before you learn it in a more sorrowful way."

Monica Wayne, knowing the story of Doña Carmel, felt the tears in her eyes as she listened; for all the prayers had not saved Doña Carmel from the way of sorrow—yet she was so good, so good!

"But after one chooses the dream, what then, Doña Carmelita?" she asked, with averted face. "I chose the wrong dream that morning in San Juan, and how could I know? And the right dream was almost in touch of my hand there, and I—how could I know that, either?" she added, bitterly.

"Only the angels know," acknowledged Sister Teresa, "and I think they look on us often and are sorry;" and then she added, "You will perhaps tell to me that good dream of San Juan, Querida mine?"

But Monica shook her head.

"It was only the shadow of a dream, and I did not know that some day it could have been my own," she answered, sadly, and Sister Teresa, stroking her hair, asked no more.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHATEVER Hamilton Dacy had said in the bosom of his family concerning the disappearance of Monica from their midst, it proved effective, and when the Tony Allens called to take her out for a spin in a new car there was no reference made to the fact of her absence. Dacy thought he knew where she had been, and approved of it, and for once he had asserted himself to some purpose.

Nell looked radiant, and regarded with distinct approval the white and gray of Monica's hood and cloak. She never could recall seeing Monica in the newest cuts and colors, yet had never been conscious of any lack of harmonies. She looked right some way, though she might choose to wear a Charles the First gown when everyone else was wearing hobble skirts or imitation Empire. Nell wondered how she did it, yet appear always unconscious of dress.

"Aunt Martha and Fannie are coming in to see you this afternoon," she stated, "but I was determined to get you for a little run and lunch somewhere up country, so you could give us our honeymoon lecture without much of an audience." Then to her husband, "She told me, Tony, you were too good for me!"

"Why, oh, why, did you not tell me that?" sighed the happy man, assuming a lugubrious expression.

"Too hopeless a case!" retorted Monica.

"I suppose you haven't seen Lane since we left?" queried Nell. "No one seems to have seen him but Fannie, and I get cold chills when I think of what we did to him, and that we have him yet to meet!"

"Oo-o!" shivered Tony.

"Never mind, little boy; I'll protect you!"

"Thank you, darling!" breathed her husband.

"And that portrait," continued Nell. "Of course, Lane ordered it, but we want it, and he should make us go down on our knees for it. I wonder if he will?"

"And I have a little wonder of my own," observed Monica. "There was to be a companion portrait of Mr. Sargent. I am wondering if I lose that order now?"

"No—paint it, get your money!" advised Nell, with decision. "It will be ready for his next girl."

"From the way Mrs. Fan is raving over him," said Tony, sagely, "she evidently would not mind being next."

"Oh, she always raves over any celebrity she chances to know," scoffed Nell. "Wants everyone to know the importance of her dearest friends."

"Malice in that remark," was Tony's comment, "also jealousy, because you are out of the running for that particular celebrity. Here is our little lunch

place, and you can forget your loss in something to eat!"

They returned to the studio a couple of hours later, Monica going at once to the telephone to ask if there had been any calls. When told that Mr. Sargent had called up twice, she was conscious of a wave of sickness sweeping over her in her utter disappointment. Twice! and she had been simply killing time by silly chatter and silly eating with two happy people, who needed no one. Twice! and she did not know where to find him, and—

"He left a message that he would call about five on the chance of finding you," added the operator.

"Oh, thank you!"

"Monica that little run in the open has given you color," observed Nell, who was removing her veil and regarding her picture, still on the easel where Lulu had placed it. "Has Aunt Martha been here? Well, she will be. Fannie has her in tow for some canine pet function. Did you *ever* think Aunt Martha would come to that? Of course, she may come to worse if she trails with Fannie."

"And Mrs. Fan is helping locate stock already for that old plantation of Gilman's, in order to be good and ready when he gets it," said Tony, informingly, to Monica. "We met them at dinner last night, and the things the lady knows about the proper caper in dogs—wow!"

"Oh, well," reminded his wife, "it gets her in with the sort of people who own that sort of dogs — and there you are! It looks piffling to me, but it really is n't if it builds the ladder she wants. Gillie has asked us all down to that old place for a housewarming soon as the case is settled. Me for the horses there instead of the kyoodles."

Monica was moving about restlessly while they chattered and told her the things they deemed of interest. At Nell's mention of the color given her by the ride, she had glanced in a mirror, and then added to her corsage the white buds of roses received that morning. Then she criticised the dressing of Mrs. Allen's hair in an ultra mode, and told her she must change it if the portrait was ever finished. She was eager to have them go, to be alone, yet nervously keeping up discussion of trifling things, while she watched the clock, and wished she had opened the door to all the others the day before!

And when she heard Rosa going to the door — she turned warningly to the two.

"This is the time to seek shelter if you fear to meet the man you ran away from," she observed.

"*Lane?*" and Nell's voice was almost tragic in her surprise. "Oh, Tony, hide me!"

She clutched Tony by the arm and fairly dragged him behind a tall screen — a trifle to the dismay of their hostess — she had not anticipated that her teas-

ing suggestion would be taken literally — and it left her for a moment embarrassed. Then she turned to meet the newcomer, with her finger to her lips, warningly.

"Ah, Mr. Sargent," she said, with a polite show of interest; "it is nice of you to hunt up my workshop again."

"Not so nice as it is of you to open the door to us after the eternity of your absence!"

"If eternity lasts no longer and flies so swiftly all our guide books will need to be revised," she remarked, lightly, though she was flushing and tremulous under his devouring gaze. "I had some friends here who were anxious to meet you," she added, as she turned to the screen, "but their extreme shyness —"

She folded the screen back, and to her own surprise found Nell and Tony, kneeling with heads bent, and hands clasped prayerfully. Sargent regarded them with quiet amusement.

"Yes, I have a recollection of their extreme shyness," he observed, "on a wedding date. They were shy about three thousand miles." He extended his hands over them in mock solemnity. "Bless you, my children, bless you!"

"Oh, Lane, you are good as gold!" was Nell's tribute, as she scrambled to her feet and seized his one hand, while Tony held the other.

"You know I warned you I would take her if she said so."

"So you did," agreed Sargent. "I forgot all about that until ten days ago—had no time before."

Monica Wayne smiled at him, mockingly.

"Were your duties as a lion in Washington too arduous?" she inquired, and he glanced at her, quizzically, but made no reply.

"Lane," volunteered Mrs. Tony, warningly, "remember that you are no longer 'cousin-to-be' to an artist! Do you still find it necessary to come and be snubbed?"

He regarded her blandly, quite aware that she was more than a little curious.

"If I am willing to risk any amount of snubbings for the precious privilege of meditating before a certain unfinished portrait"—but the laughter of the others interrupted him.

"All very fine," commented Nell. "If you had been so impressive in days past I might not have asked Tony—the second time—to marry me."

"Don't reach for all the honors," suggested Tony. "I asked the first time."

"We were wondering," remarked Mrs. Wayne, casually, "whether I was still to get the order for the other picture—your portrait?"

"Certainly, Lane; have it painted before you find your next girl, the ideal woman. Gillie will tell you modern love never lasts long enough to paint a pair of lovers—while in love. The camera is the only thing quick enough to catch them."

"Nice, hopeful outlook for *me*," grumbled Tony, "with a 'till death do us part' contract on my hands."

"Oh, *women* are constant, naturally," announced his wife, with a most virtuous expression, "but the men—"

"If we have no belief in men, they will have very little to live up to; don't you think so?" queried Monica, and Nell dropped into a chair and stared.

"How changed are the minds of the mighty! Do you remember, Lane, how she used to snub us all to extinction if we dared talk constancy in this studio? Of course, Monica, it's this way," she elucidated; "we pretend to believe them, and they pretend to be deceived by our pretense, but no one is fooled, even a little bit!"

There was laughter, and some argument, between the Tony Allens over this statement, while the eyes of Monica and Sargent met in a long look of veiled understanding. She turned away with quickened breath to greet Mrs. Dacy and Fannie Smythe-Orville, whose glance went quickly from Mrs. Wayne to Mr. Sargent. She had never forgotten that he was always willing to go with Nell to that studio, though he shunned every other social thing. It would be curious if, after all—and her mind worked rapidly as she crossed the room and tried to read the future for Glyndon Wayne, if, after all, this glacial wife of his could be aroused to a really active interest in a divorce.

"Delighted to find you home again," she fluttered

with her sweetest smile, "and Mr. Sargent. How nice! I've something really good to tell you, you heart breaker!" and she drew him aside with a little coquettish air of secrecy. He listened with a polite smile, but his eyes were on Monica, and his heart filled with impatience as the group enlarged instead of diminished. She also was under a feverish, nervous strain, visible to him if not the others. His eyes softened as he looked at her and remembered how often she had deceived him in the other days by that assumption of cool serenity.

"Well, Monica, I can't say you look any better for your trip," said Mrs. Dacy, looking her over, critically, "Were you painting?"

"A little."

She went into the music room to find a portfolio of California photographs for Tony, and Sargent for the first time had an opportunity to offer his assistance and speak with her alone for a minute. Mrs. Smythe-Orville directed the attention of Nell to them, and she, much amused, noted that Lane was speaking with quiet earnestness to Monica, who turned away with an abruptness almost petulant.

"Aunty," she whispered, with real joy, "you may observe that your favorite for first place is not wearing the willow for me, not for a moment. He just reached town, and has come straight to see Monica."

"A lot of good that will do him."

"Not a particle, and Hallet is in the same boat. He was here before any of us, with roses."

"That's the effect of this studio life and the independence of it. I am out of patience with George, for, after all, she is still Glyndon's wife."

"Why don't you add 'Poor Glyndon'?" asked her niece, irritated at the tone. But the entrance of Hallet, and the greetings, quelled the little discordant note. Everyone liked Hallet, and Nell scolded him for coming so late that she could only say "Howdy," as she and Tony were scheduled for a tea they did not dare miss.

"And where, Tony, is that book we got for Lulu?" she demanded, as she straightened her hat and adjusted her wraps. "You did not leave it in the car, did you? I want Monica to decide the binding."

Tony found it in the pocket of his overcoat and slipped from its pretty box a volume in blue and silver.

"Very sweet," commented Mrs. Smythe-Orville, perfunctorily, as he extended the book for her opinion, "and so dear of you to remember her. Is it a story book? She is devouring romances these days. Mr. Gilman selects most of them."

"Monica, I want your artistic opinion on this," decided Nell. "Would you select this for Lulu in preference to a flexible kid binding? I could have the latter in any shade."

"I should think the decoration of this would appeal to her," and Monica turned the volume over to look at the back lettering. "The Mill on the Floss"; "it is very daintily gotten up."

"What book is it?" asked Mrs. Smythe-Orville, sharply. "I never looked at the title, will they change it?"

"What is the matter?" demanded Nell, "don't you like it?"

"I know nothing about it, but Lulu is so curious—she is at that awful questioning age. If she likes the story she will want to know all about who wrote it, where she lived, and—well, all the details. So, you see," she added, appealingly, "you see, it wouldn't do. We can't quite afford to ignore the author's peculiar mode of life—and, as a gift to a young girl—"

"Oh, good Lord!" growled Nell, as if sending up a prayer for patience. Only Monica heard her, and she gripped Nell's hand for silence.

The pointed lack of comment, or encouragement, caused Mrs. Smythe-Orville to recall that night at the bungalow when Mrs. Wayne had made her plea for another woman across the water.

"Oh, I don't mean to be uncharitable," she added, "I really feel the deepest pity for the misguided creatures who forget the, ah—the conventions in that way. But should I, or should I not, allow my daughter to form an admiration for such a person?"

Sargent, watching Monica, felt a dull, furious re-

sentment against the speaker. His hands clenched with the desire of primitive man to protect his mate. Wild, unknown instincts swept over him, and it was with an effort beyond the usual that he schooled himself to remark quietly.

"If your daughter has the intelligence to appreciate the wonderful brain of that wonderful woman you have reason to be proud of your daughter!"

"Oh!" fluttered Mrs. Smythe-Orville, with the eager desire to be well in the graces of McLane Sargent. "It is not a question of brain, Mr. Sargent. I know nothing about her brain, but I think we all know that the, ah—her husband—was a man whom the law would not allow her to marry!"

"Their marriage, because of a technicality, was without legal form," he assented. "But it was true marriage, for all that."

"Lane Sargent, I am astonished!" confessed Mrs. Dacy, shaking her head at him in her most decided way. "I never expected to hear you express such sentiments. Such a woman is and should be disgraced. The man could never protect her from that."

"His devotion might make amends."

"Perhaps," conceded Hallet, "but how can we know? I doubt if it ever does make amends to a sensitive, refined woman."

"Refined?" and the tone of Mrs. Smythe-Orville was a protest against the term.

"Certainly; even absolute evil is not always coarse.

For example, there is Sargent's *Woman of the Twilight.*"

"But you must concede that such relations are a relative evil," she persisted, and Nell glared at her, irritated beyond endurance that she had the lack of tact to bring up such a subject after that experience at the bungalow. No wonder Monica turned her head away in stony, absolutely stony, silence!

"It depends entirely on the man and the woman in the case," said Sargent, in reply to Mrs. Smythe-Orville's last statement. "The same rules apply to marriage under every recognized law."

Hallet smiled at him with lifted brows.

"You go far," he observed, "and you may be right in one way, but when a man takes a woman for his wife, and has to apologize for her, it spells disillusion. He may keep up a brave pretense, and even succeed in deceiving the woman always, but the affection of which a man can not be proud is not the sort to influence him to much that is good, and if he is a thinking man he knows it."

"Good sermon, George," volunteered Tony approvingly. "We all promise either to be good—or stop thinking. Whose side are you on, Madame Monica?"

"I know before she speaks," said Nell, with the laudable desire to end the awkward subject. "She never does agree with Lane."

"Then, consider that I have spoken," said Monica,

after a moment of hesitation. But she turned to Hallet with a look of appeal, maddening to Sargent, at whom she would not look at all.

"Do you mean that?" she asked. "You really believe it is not possible for a man to care for a woman with the best love of his nature simply because her idea of marriage does not depend on legal forms? Suppose the legal form is not possible, as in the case quoted, would not the absolute sacrifice she made, her devotion—"

She ceased speaking as Hallet, slowly smiling, shook his head.

"Men care most for the women who make no such sacrifices."

"Such men would be ungrateful—animals," decided Sargent; but Monica, whom he addressed, did not even look at him.

"I fancy," she remarked, "that it is not gratitude women care for, but—love."

"You had better come and talk to *me*, Lane," suggested Nell; "you'll be more appreciated!"

Monica turned again to Hallet as to a bulwark of strength from whom she hoped much.

"You are thinking only of your legal affairs, and the type of person oftenest involved there. But the great loves of history have been unwedded loves—desperate, unhappy loves," she urged; "and such natures, can you measure them by smaller rule?"

"But this is not the age of romantic devotion,

Madame Monica," said Tony, shielding his head from an imaginary blow from his wife, "even if I do say it as had n't ought to. Most of us would rather be happy in an average sort of way than to be desperately happy and desperately miserable by turns."

"Do I exchange this book?" demanded Nell, "and if so, for what? My humble opinion is that the author of it was more happy in the life she chose than any we could have chosen for her."

"And the world," said Sargent, "is richer for that life."

"Lane, I am disappointed in you," protested Mrs. Dacy, solemnly; "you pretend you did find a saint-like creature who lived in that half light of life — your "twilight woman" — but that was in a pagan, out of the world place. No one believes in them anywhere else. And suppose there had been children?"

"Yes, Mrs. Dacy," agreed Hallet, "that side of the situation has to be considered. All the decrees of courts cannot change the social status of the children of such — marriages."

"Do any of you high-brows know anything against the social standing of old Mother Hubbard who went to the cupboard?" demanded Nell, desperately. "If she is all right, I will exchange this for an illustrated account of her wonderful dog, warranted not to corrupt the youthful mind! Fan," she added, in open confidence to Mrs. Smythe-Orville, "you are the sort to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel, and sometimes

you make me very tired. Good-by, Monica! Come and see us, Lane. Come, Tony boy."

Hallet was beside Monica as she clasped hands with Nell and Tony, and Lane could see how deep was his interest as he asked her guardedly if she had not come back to allow him again the privilege of looking after that legal matter for her.

And Lane could scarcely believe his own hearing when he heard her say "no."

"I think it would be right to venture now," urged Hallet. "The same obstacle can never occur again."

But Monica shook her head.

"I am going away," she said. "I have only come to pack up. Life here has been spoiled for me. I am going away—for quite a while."

"I hope at least you will allow me to talk to you of it again," he said, as Mrs. Dacy joined them, and Sargent found Mrs. Smythe-Orville's muff, and walked with them to the door.

"I will see you to the elevator," he said, and bowed to Mrs. Wayne, as they all went out along the hall together.

"I'll be back, Monica, I left my shopping bag here," called Mrs. Dacy, but Monica scarcely heard. She stood in the middle of the room looking about her in a desolate, lonely sort of way, carrying an ache to the heart of Sargent, who glanced back, and saw her there.

But when he returned, after leaving the others at

the entrance, she was not in the room. He halted, puzzled for a moment, and then went into the music room.

"Monica," he called, softly; "Monica!"

The inner door opened and she stood on the threshold, all her cool self-possession gone, her hands reaching out to him in utter abandon.

"Is it true, Lane, is it true? Oh, they were thrusting knives in me, all those people! Is it all true?"

She was trembling as from a nervous chill and he drew her into his arms, holding her close as if to bar out all discordant memory of the world.

"Dear," he said, gently, "such people will always have such ideas, and they are the ideas of the majority." He could feel her grow rigid in his arms as he spoke. "We can't change that, or argue it now. Rather than see you tortured like that again, if there was no other way, I would part from you forever!"

"Yes, certainly," she said, coldly, and endeavored to free herself.

"Monica!"

"There are no bonds about you."

"Monica!"

"And all the doors will be open always—to you!"

"By—"

"You heard! It is only your 'women of the twilight' who are disgraced, the world sees no shadow on the lives of men!"

"We all know that, but it has nothing to do with

you and me. We will be married, as other people are married, as soon as it is legally possible."

She gave him a strange look, and releasing herself gently sank into a chair, covering her face with her hands. He stood looking down at her, troubled, perplexed, then brought a chair beside her, and drew the covered face to his breast, touching with his lips the beautiful crown of her hair.

"I can't understand you, my Doña Querida," he half whispered in the fond reasoning tone of a love that was absolute. "So short a time since we parted in your wonderful old garden, yet I find you a different woman! You come back to consult Hallet about that divorce, yet I heard you tell him you had no business for him to arrange. We planned that you remain here for the winter, yet I hear you say that you leave very soon." She nodded her head in silence, and nestled closer in his arms. "Your letters have been filled with a vague discontent, you seem to have forgotten everything of our life together, the days just past, and the plans for the future."

"Oh, the *future!*" breathed Monica, sobbingly, and rose to her feet with outflung arms of utter despair. She would have evaded him, but he caught her in his arms, and held her, gripping her in fierce protest, and the tone of tender reasoning was gone.

"Do you think I will allow this to go on?" he demanded. "It is this infernal secrecy wearing on your nerves until you are actually ill. I will not have

it one more day than is necessary—and you shan't go away!"

"I must go, Lane, I must!"

"No, tomorrow you have Hallet plan for that divorce, here or elsewhere! It may take months, and—"

"Months!" she interrupted, despairingly. "I tell you, I meant what I said to Hallet. I—I have had to change my mind concerning the divorce."

He stepped back from her, anger and incredulity in his face.

"Changed your mind! Changed your mind? And about our marriage?"

"And about—our marriage!" she agreed, hopelessly.

"Are you absolutely mad?" he demanded. "Has the accursed chatter of those women—"

"Oh," she moaned in utter abandon, "the talk of those people could not have hurt me if I, myself, had not made it possible. The talk of those people—oh, Lane!" and her tones were tender with the weight of memories. "It was only you and I in all the world! And I had been so sickened of the world's creeds and laws, many of them weak, many of them wicked! They seemed such trifling things that I threw them aside—glad to show you the world was nothing to me and that you were everything! But the talk of those people—*if there had been children!* Lane, they are

right, I only thought of our world as it was, not of our world as it might be!"

She was clinging to him, her face hidden, and her frame shaken with dry, despairing sobs. He stroked her hair soothingly, his eyes hard and strained from the pain he had to witness and for which he could give so little help!

"Monica!" he whispered, "look up, don't hide your face from me like that. I scarcely know you in this mood. Where is my sweetheart comrade of our southern days? Where is my Doña Querida, the little rebel who would have defied the universe? Look up, sweetheart. Where is your daring, your bravery, your philosophy?"

"Gone, all gone!" she confessed, brokenly.

"Then I must do the thinking for both," he decided, "and act at once. I will see Hallet tonight, and tell him he is to go ahead, and—"

"No, no, no!" she protested, wildly. "You must not, you can not! It is too late—for that!"

"Too—late?" He stared at her, frowning and perplexed.

"She said—*if there had been—children*—oh, Lane—"

Her voice sank to a mere whisper, and with drooped head and hands clasped tightly over her breast she stood before him, wordless yet eloquent.

For one astounded moment he gazed at her, incredulous, and then swept her into his arms.

"My poor little girl!" and his voice trembled with its weight of tenderness. "And you have been fighting this question out all alone? Well, sweetheart, we will share the secret together now, you and I!"

"And we will go away?" she whispered; "away?"

"Yes, we will go away. Now listen: your friends are coming back, they must not find me here. We must be very careful and very wise, little woman. After they have gone, I will return, and we can have the long hours for our plans. Is that what you want?"

She nodded her head in silence, and a great tenderness swept over him at the new shyness, and her sudden absolute dependence on him. He lifted her in his arms and laid her on the couch, kneeling beside her and looking deep, deep into her eyes.

"I am going now," he whispered, "and while I am gone you are to lie here and rest, and hold but one thought close in your heart! Shall I tell you what it is?"

She nodded, and held his hands clasped in hers, while he bent over her, his lips on her forehead, her eyes, and her tremulous mouth.

"It is that you belong to me now more than ever—my Doña Querida!"

Twice Rosa ventured into the studio after the last caller had taken his departure, but each time her mistress lay with closed eyes as if asleep, and she feared to disturb her.

CHAPTER XIX

LATER, however, a call at the telephone told her Hettie, with Sister Teresa, was downstairs, and if Mrs. Wayne was not engaged—

"What is it, Rosa?" asked Monica from the couch. "Yes, Hettie was to bring back some work today, and Sister Teresa has a protegé near here for whom I promised help. I don't feel quite equal to help of a strenuous sort, Rosa, but have them come in here, and perhaps some tea—"

She felt too worn out by the day to adjust herself easily to even the simple demands Sister Teresa or Hettie might make, yet it seemed easier to receive them than not to, notwithstanding the fact that she could feel the older woman's desire to come close—close as she had been in the other days.

And Monica Wayne knew that in the new world—the world of the new dream—she must walk alone without sympathy or understanding from women!

If the love of the one man enfolded her, even that must be a triple wall against their old world, and their very hearts must do sentinel duty forever along the parapet!

"Ah, Querida *mia*! Is it that you are ill?" and Sister Teresa bent over her eagerly. "An ache in

the head maybe? All the people coming, yes? Good that it is only the tired body today. Hettie has come but now with me from where there are tired souls. So good she is, your Hettie! For a child she is so wise to help."

Monica lay with her hand sheltering her eyes as the light was turned on in growing dusk, and Hettie coming in uttered a little cry at the sight of her pale face.

"You are really ill, are you not?" she asked. "A headache? Oh, let me help that! I can, I am sure I can — this way," and she pressed her fingers slowly over the temples.

"Your fingers are cool, you are very kind," murmured Monica, in a sort of dreamy content that the thought of the headache would send them home very soon — and then he would come back, and then —

"Kind!" breathed Hettie Craig, with a little sigh, "I wish I could do some kind thing for you. You lifted me out of despair, and have given me beautiful work. I did not bring the sewing because I have been helping Sister Teresa today, and she praised me for it. Oh, and I was so proud, and —"

"Where is she?" asked Monica, opening her eyes. "I want her to know that Mrs. Allen is interested in her work of refuge. I told her of it today. She will send all the work she can, sewing and embroidery, and she will send her friends."

"How good!" murmured Hettie. "Sister Teresa

went with Rosa to see that your tea is made some certain way. She will be happy over special interest in the work. To keep the girls employed helps so wonderfully—and to have *pretty* work—"

Her voice died away in her throat, and Monica, opening her eyes, saw Mrs. Dacy in the studio. Mrs. Smythe-Orville was with her.

"Oh, there you are," was Mrs. Dacy's comment. "We ran up for my shopping bag, I could n't carry it to a tea." Then she noticed the girl with averted head who knelt beside the couch. "What is wrong?" she added, "sick?"

"Oh, no, a bit tired," and Monica got up from the couch with a little nod of dismissal to the girl. "Thank you, Hettie."

"Hettie!" and the amazed tone of Mrs. Dacy made the girl shrink as she turned away. "I thought so! Well, Monica, I must say you are careless!"

"I don't understand," and Monica looked at the girl, who could not meet her eyes, but stood still, stricken with fear.

Mrs. Dacy turned to Mrs. Smythe-Orville.

"That is the girl I told you of at the shore—had to send her away for waylaying gentlemen in the garden."

"Oh, shocking!"

"Mrs. Dacy!" protested Monica, "there is some mistake, some hideous mistake!"

"Nothing of the kind," declared Mrs. Dacy, sol-

emnly, "she belongs to the class we were discussing here but a little while ago — never dependable! She secured one position by referring to me and —"

"It was only concerning the work," said Hettie, her pleading eyes on Mrs. Dacy's face; but the plea was not heeded, for Mrs. Dacy nodded her head warningly at Monica, as she stated grimly: "She never tried *that* again!"

"No!" burst out Hettie with sudden force, and a note of poignant despair as she saw the safe ground crumbling beneath her, "you had me sent away, and that woman had me sent away from another place, until there was nothing left to me but — the streets!"

Monica, bewildered, laid her hand on Hettie's shoulder detainingly, but her gaze was turned on Mrs. Dacy.

"Is that your Christian charity?" she asked, and while Mrs. Smythe-Orville shrugged slightly and adjusted her furs, Mrs. Dacy felt momentarily uncomfortable, though of course the frightened, desperate countenance of the girl betrayed that she was trapped, and knew it.

"Monica, you don't understand," she stated, with decision; "also, you should have consulted me before engaging her. Such people always have queer acquaintances," and she made a comprehensive gesture towards the rugs and bric-a-brac. "One would think for your own sake you would be cautious. The girl comes of exceedingly doubtful stock, and —"

"Even if that were true," interrupted Monica, "could you not, among your various organized missions, find a home for one girl who only asked leave to work?"

"Monica!" protested Mrs. Dacy, strong in the consciousness of virtuous intents. "Your ideas have always been peculiar, and — elastic. Fortunately, my name is too well known in deserving charities to be affected by such opinions. I try to do you a favor, but it is evidently not appreciated; but I warn you! Come, Fannie."

"So sorry to intrude, dear Mrs. Wayne," murmured Mrs. Smythe-Orville, "and I trust you will not allow this sad affair to — to really trouble you much. Good evening," and the soft rustle of her gown alone broke the silence as she hastened into the hall after the affronted lady.

The room seemed strangely silent after their departure. The girl stood shamed, as if waiting sentence, in the middle of the floor. After that one outbreak, she seemed to shrink within herself more than ever, a beaten, shaken reed in the winds of her little world.

Across the hall could be heard the cheery tinkle of tea things on a tray, and the voice of Maum Rosa, elated that the wonderful lady in the habit of a sisterhood should actually walk into her kitchen, approve all things in her soft, musical speech, and find pleasure in adjusting things on a tray. It was as if a

habitant of a different planet had stepped down to help wait on her Miss Mona, an invasion a trifle embarrassing, yet to be glowingly proud of.

Monica, seated on the couch, regarded the shamed girl wistfully, yet did not speak until the outer door had closed on the callers; then she reached out her hand.

"Come here, Hettie," she said, quietly. "Why did you not tell me?"

"Oh, I was afraid, afraid!" said the girl, sinking on the floor beside her, in a very tempest of shaking sobs. She had been braced against coldness, but against the tenderness in Monica's tones all her barriers were useless, and she knelt there, her head on the couch, broken and trembling.

"Afraid of *me,* Hettie?"

The girl nodded her head, struggling to control her voice for speech.

"Afraid of—of everybody," she acknowledged. "Even good women can be terribly hard on the girls who—who have not had their chances in life. I did get one place as nurse—two lovely children," and there was a wistful smile on her tear-wet face as she lifted it, "and they—they were fond of me. But the lady sent me away when she learned my mother had never been married; she could not risk her children with a girl who might inherit vicious tendencies from such a mother."

Monica rose to her feet abruptly, staring at Hettie,

fascinated, yet drawing away, and the girl, frightened, appealing, uttered a little cry as she clung to her skirt.

"Oh! don't you turn against me," she moaned. "*I* can't help it. All my life I've had to fight that disgrace. You don't know what that means to a girl—but it's terrible! Terrible to be met at every turn by people, men as well as women, who think I must be vile because my mother was no man's wife."

"Hettie, Hettie!" whispered Monica, putting out her hands in protest, "you, you hurt me! Don't, Hettie."

Sister Teresa crossed the hall and halted, surprised and puzzled, at the rigid figure of Monica, her head thrown back, staring as if in terror at the girl clutching her skirt, the girl muttering, "It is true, it is true. The word 'mother' holds nothing sacred to me. I am glad she died before I could remember her face, and —hate it!"

"*Santa Maria!*" the cry of horror from Sister Teresa, as she crossed the room and laid her hand on the girl's arm, "what words, what words!"

But Hettie threw off the restraining hand and struggled to her feet, staring from one to the other like a creature at bay.

"I am glad, I am!" she protested wildly. "Now you know how bad I am, and you will send me away. But I *am* glad! That is the one sin for which there should be no forgiveness—the endless sin against an innocent child!"

"Hettie, little one!" pleaded Sister Teresa, crossing herself at the horror of non-forgiveness, "the good God does forgive, and the saints do—"

But Hettie threw up her head in the defiance of desperation against the heavy odds of the world.

"How *could* He?" she demanded. "Would God dare forgive her in Heaven and leave me here, in hell!—an outcast—to suffer for her sin?"

Then the two clung together in terror as Monica Wayne without a word or a cry crumpled down into unconsciousness.

Maum Rosa, halted on the threshold by the startling words of the two, put aside her tray and reached her mistress before the other two recovered from their absolute consternation.

"Oh, what have I done? what have I done?" moaned Hettie, as she huddled down beside Monica, who lay white—white as the roses of silence on her own breast.

"You all go 'long out of here!" commanded the black woman, her tones thick with rage. "All you white folks in this north country jest a-killin' the life out o' my Miss Mona! Don't you touch her! I'll take care of my baby my own self, an' you all go 'long out o' here!"

CHAPTER XX

THE chug-chug of a little steamer sounded through the woods of southern cypress and live oak, and Monica Wayne, under the curtains of swaying gray moss, walked beside a round-faced little man with kindly eyes, and a worried expression. He carried a medicine case, and waved his hand to Jim, Maum Rosa's grandson, who, in a dugout canoe, was waiting a few rods from the river bank to signal the up-coming boat.

"I am sorry I can't see your husband today, Mrs. Wayne," he repeated, and glanced back along the path, "but I have to get up the river to Atkins Landing—got to!" Then he turned his troubled gaze again to her rather pale face, "You take care of yourself," he ordered. "We have to take care of ourselves, no matter what we have to go through! Fact is, we need to take more care the more we have to go through, and, and—well—don't let anything overwhelm you again, and—"

The boat whistle sounded a reply to Jim's signal and it seemed to silence speech for him.

"But there is nothing now to overwhelm me, doctor, since he is better," she answered, with a wan smile. "I am tired, of course—just the lack of sleep—

but now that he is sleeping—oh, it is so wonderful! And when I can tell his father that it will not even be necessary for you to come again, well—after the awful dread—you know—"

The bell was clanging, and the little steamer was backing in order to head into the shore. Two black men were shoving a plank from the lower deck, and the little old doctor nodded his head, and grasped tightly the hand she offered.

"Yes, I do know," he said, and his eyes were not quite dry, as he looked on her hopeful face. "Yes, dear child, I do know, God bless you! and—"

The plank touched the shore.

"Good-by," he said, and ran across the narrow bridge. Then the bell clanged again, and the boat backed into the stream and headed up the little winding river between the lines of cypress, moss-draped and vine-girdled.

The doctor stood, his hat in his hand, looking back at her for a space; then, lifting his hat in grave salute, he turned away.

Jim, slender and agile as a weasel, ran his dugout into shore, tied it to a cypress knee, and scudded up along the woods, disappearing around the corner of a high wall of green hedge.

Monica followed him more slowly. All her movements had a certain weary languor, and she halted here and there, noting the sudden awakening to life of various blooming things under a late warm rain.

Jim had been a careful caretaker, and the old colonial cottage had roses abloom over the lattice to the south; and here and there over the tall hedge a struggling vine peeped, carrying a bit of color.

Sargent, standing in one of the windows, unbuckling riding leggings, watched her moving—a bit of white and scarlet—through the wild beauty of the old garden. Little had been pruned, and the oleanders made thickets of rich color against the gray-green of the cypress trees with their burden of swaying mosses. The scarlet bolero and belt she wore, and the scarlet ribbons of her wide hat, made her, in her white gown, seem but another, dearer flower in the quaint old garden.

Yet a quick frown of pain came to him as he watched her—she fitted that corner of ancient peace so well! In the same garden her grandmother had been wooed in a former day, and Rosa could tell under which rose-tree the mother of Monica had said "yes" to her lover. The place was haunted by the wraiths of those lovely women and the men who had loved them. Their eyes looked down at him hauntingly from the old walls—gentle, distinguished faces—and one sweet portrait over the writing-desk with eyes so hauntingly alive that there were moments when he could have wished it removed had courage come to voice the thought. The eyes were those of Monica's mother—the fair girl wife whose years had been so few.

He turned with a sigh from the window and opened

the package of mail for which he had ridden eight miles across the country that morning. Rosa came in quietly from the adjoining room, picked up the mail-bag and leggings and put them in the closet. Then she stood at one of the windows a moment looking out at Monica coming slowly through the garden, and again looked at Sargent, who was opening mail. She seemed worried and anxious, but at last ventured to speak.

"Mr. Lane, please sir, would you lend me your watch?" she asked.

"Certainly, Maum Rosa, to time the medicine with?" She did not make any reply as she accepted the watch, and he added, "The place was so quiet when I came in that I thought you were all asleep."

"No, sir, no one asleep but him," she said, with a motion of her head towards the door; then she added, significantly, "He been a-sleepin' all morning!"

"That's the change for the better of which the doctor spoke, isn't it?" he asked.

"That's what Miss Mona thinks," she answered, evasively, and she scanned anxiously the face of her mistress as she stepped in from the veranda through the glass door.

But there was no anxiety in Monica's face. She smiled brightly at Sargent, and went direct to the inner door, looking in a moment, and then turned with a sigh of relief.

"Lane, I am almost happy this morning," she

announced, standing beside him, her hands on his shoulder. "He is still sleeping, and all the fever gone! That good doctor spoke as if he would not need to come again."

"That is fine!" and Sargent reached up and clasped her hand, but Rosa, who was about to leave the room, stood still, listening and troubled.

"Yes, isn't it?" and Monica removed her hat and gave it to Rosa. "I think he was really sorry to end his visits; told me to take care of myself, and called me a dear child."

"Called you a 'dear child,' did he?" growled Sargent, with assumed ferocity; "perhaps it was just as well I was not here!"

Monica smiled, pinched his ear, and then nestled down beside him in a low willow-chair.

"How ungrateful of you!" she observed, "for he wanted especially to see you—waited until the last minute. The boat put in for him at our landing. Did you hear the whistle?"

He nodded, and drew her hand up to his lips, which demonstration having been paid in kind, she arose and began to busy herself with a work-basket filled with dainty muslins, narrow laces, and narrowest of blue ribbons, one bolt of the latter having unrolled several yards of itself to the confusion of the rest of the collection.

"You know, Lane," she observed, "I never was nervous in this way before. I suppose it is because of

the awful strain I—we have been under. I seem to need some work for my hands to do every minute when I am not with him!" Then after a moment she added, "You were much longer away today."

"Yes, there were so many things to see to personally, and one has to guard every move. It was a good thought to have my mail forwarded to a point in Alabama, though I am confident that postmaster thinks I am a highway robber or a confidence man hiding somewhere in the swamps. It would have its humorous side under other circumstances, but," and he turned to the letters, "it is horrible to live in this enforced secrecy!"

Monica ceased winding the blue ribbon, and stared into the garden.

"A year ago you did not find it horrible," she said, at last.

"What?" he turned to look at her, an open letter in his hand. Then at sight of her face he put down the letter and took her in his arms.

"A year ago," he said, tenderly, "there was no such danger for you. A note of alarm and we had only to fold our tent, that is untie our canoe, and drift away into some other haven of romance! Ah, those beautiful days and that beautiful garden and your wonderful rose arbor! Paradise must grow roses with that same fragrance else Paradise will lack charm for me!"

He was smiling down on her, but she did not meet his gaze; her eyes were clouded, and her voice almost cold, as she asked:

"When Love looks backward for sunshine, what sign is that?"

"Monica, don't," he begged. "This curse of brooding, of analyzing each emotion, will kill our happiness forever if you persist in it. We have endured suffering enough these past weeks—how dare you be morbid today?"

"Oh, Lane, you are right—you are always right," she confessed, brokenly. "I know I make you wretched. But what we have lived through makes a woman think, think, think!"

"Stop thinking!" he commanded, drawing her down beside him on the window seat. "Measure your happiness today by our misery if our boy had not recovered—to have gone on through life together without him!"

"Together!" she half whispered; but he caught the strange tone, and turned on her sharply.

"Together—how else?" he demanded. "Why do you speak like that? Why do you look like that? What accursed thought is in your head now?"

"Oh—h!" she assented, wearily, "accursed thought indeed, perhaps, but a curse duly weighed and measured, and bought, and—paid for!"

He stared at her helplessly. All that a man could

do he had done — all that she would let him do; and as he looked at her, a moody figure staring out into the sunlit garden, he knew it had been a failure!

He stooped and kissed her hair as she sat, chin on hand, a still, fateful figure.

"One year!" he said, hopelessly, "one year! And all our love has not brought happiness to you! oh, Monica!"

But she did not answer, and he turned with a sigh to the desk. It seemed so incredible that they should be together, yet not happy. All his heart went out to her, yet there were times when she made it impossible for him to cross the barrier of moody self-condemnation. At first he had told himself it was her own health by which those moments of depression were caused; then the troubled secrecy of their journeyings when they had traveled, each separately, to meet at some point out of the beaten track; then, when all their plans had been arranged, and all safety apparently assured, there had come the sudden illness of the young soul for whom they had opened the gates of the world, and her despair had called him quickly back to their one safe home-nest under the live oaks.

Looking at her sadly, he realized that only time, the long days of the future when she was safely his wife by the standards of the world, would adjust her mind to the sense of security necessary for happiness. The long months of brooding dread were not to be erased by a few hours of hope or sunshine, and there

was no word he could speak to lift the cloud from her mind — that was the tragic wall between them.

So he turned back to the desk and lifted the letter again, and as he read there was the warm glow of pleasure touching his face for a moment. The unexpected, unforeseen thing had happened, and he swung round to her with an involuntary exclamation of joy. She lifted her head and looked at him inquiringly.

But another thought came to him, and the joy went out of his eyes and he pushed the letter back into its envelope. "Oh, nothing," he said, lamely, in answer to her look.

"Lane, what is it?" she asked, and was keenly alert to the assumed indifference of his reply that it was merely one of the usual things coming to a writer of romances. Some one was always bobbing up asking for dramatic rights.

"But would n't you like that?" she asked.

"I — think not." But he did not look at her, and proceeded to tear off the wrappings of some magazines.

She came over and stood beside him, and he slipped his arm about her, pressing his face fondly against her sweet, slender body.

"But you looked so glad for just one moment," she persisted, and then she caught sight of the envelope and realized the significance of the theatrical producer whose address was on it.

"Lane!" she cried eagerly, "you surely would wel-

come offers from him. What is it they want? Do tell me if it is good news of your work."

He looked at her and hesitated, but realized that hesitation would arouse doubt in her ever sensitive mind, and without further protest he gave her the letter.

"Oh, for *Twilight!*" she exclaimed, her eyes widening at the letter and the terms offered. "But Lane, why this is fine, and—unusual. They want it at once, to produce this season. Could you refuse an offer like that?"

"It seems so," he replied, indifferently. "You see, he mentions the woman they want it for, and, well—she would not fit the part, not anything near it—and—and that's all."

She knew him so well, so well, and she stood by him in silence while he moved some of the papers about restlessly and turned away his face that she might not see the color flaming over him at her scrutiny.

"So," she said, at last, "all my help to you in your work amounts to this—that you are throwing away the greatest success your work could have because of me!"

"Monica!"

"That is what you are doing," she insisted steadily. "You are afraid I will be hurt. You never mention that story any more. Don't you know, your very avoidance of it tells me why? It is your masterpiece,

it is a thing any writer could be proud of; yet you would bury it, and bury all discussion of it if you could, because — oh, Lane — because a woman of the twilight is the mother of your son!"

"Oh, good God!" he exclaimed, jumping to his feet and beginning to pace the floor back and forth wildly. "Monica, don't say that again — stop it, I tell you, stop it! This morbid analysis of every word, every thought, would drive one mad! Why can't you forget, and — be happy?"

She did not answer except by an eloquent gesture towards the room of their sleeping child.

"Oh, yes," he assented, pitifully, as he caught her hand and pressed it between his own; "I know, I comprehend, else I could not have lived through the days of your self-torture."

"Self-torture!" she repeated, wistfully. "Lane, should all the penalties for transgressions of parents be visited on children? The remembrance of that other poor child, Hettie — oh —"

"Don't mention that girl's name to me!" he commanded. "Your life has had the very despair of hell in it ever since that day. A smile only when you forget for a moment, a laugh never any more! Monica," and he held her close in his arms, searching her face with tender eyes, "can't you be a little patient? Can't you be content with the happiness which is ours? We are together, and we have our child."

"Oh, Lane!" she whispered, as a remembrance

came to her, and a look of fear grew in her eyes, deepening there while her hands gripped his in terror, "last night I dreamed we did not have each other, and—our boy was lost—somewhere! I seemed to be searching for him through years, and years—and years, in some gray world of dusk where the sun never shone!"

"Monica!" he said, pleadingly, but she clung to him trembling.

"It all comes back to me," she persisted, "and, oh Lane—it was a horrible dream! I groped for your hand in the darkness, but you were not there. I ran screaming for you in that awful gloom—and there was a gray ship in the far mists, going out to sea. I stood on the edge of a gray world and called, and called—but no voice came back! I was all alone in that shadow world—utterly alone!"

She sank down into the chair, her face covered by her hands, while he stood looking down upon her, startled and perplexed, with some chord of memory vaguely thrilled—a gray ship going out in the gray sea, and the mists at the edge of the land rolling between like drifting wraiths.

The words of a letter came back to him: "the dream seems to belong to you—so I send it."

"Monica," and his tones were tender with the weight of his love and his pity, "it will never be that I sail out from any shore of any world of yours—unless you send me! Even then," and he gathered her

in his arms fondly, "I will come back if ever you give me half a chance."

"I know, Lane, and you are wonderful—so wonderful to me!" she confessed; "but your very patience shows me how very terrible the situation would be if robbed of it. And, dear, all your patience and all your love cannot lift the shadow we live and breathe in always—and that dream—"

"It is morbid waking thoughts from which such dreams come," he said, reassuringly, "and the morbid thoughts will soon have nothing left to feed upon. Now that he is better, we must arrange that I go North the first day possible. The danger to you is doubled so long as I am here."

"I know, I waken in the night terror-stricken sometimes at the thought of what might happen if—his lawyers—"

She halted uncertainly, and he drew her to him with a sharp, decisive movement of protection.

"Yes, dear, we are both haunted by the same fears," he confessed. "Today near the village I almost had heart failure at sight of some fox hunters a half mile across the fields. There was not one chance in a hundred that any of them would know me—which did not prevent me from riding in the pine woods all the way home."

"I know," she assented softly. "By next week I can let you go—next week, when he is entirely well!"

Together they went up to the door of their child's

room and looked in. He was sleeping, with Rosa hovering over him fondly. Monica held up a warning finger to Sargent.

"You might wake him," she said, and halted him there while she slipped inside and dropped down on her knees by the bed in the shadowy room, the very picture of adoring motherhood.

Sargent turned back to the desk, gathering up the envelopes and wrappers, every scrap on which his name was visible. As he opened a paper he had overlooked, a letter fell at his feet. It had slipped under the edge of the wrapper.

As he opened it, Maum Rosa came from the child's room, looking back in a helpless, worried way, and moved towards him as if for confidential speech, but he brushed past her, and tapped at the door guardedly, yet imperative.

Monica, surprised, came out of the room; her finger was on her lips for silence.

"Still sleeping," she whispered warningly. "What is it, dear?"

"A letter, read it. You see, my dread was not without cause."

She took the letter wonderingly, but only read a portion, when she turned to him in amaze.

"An invitation to a house party at Oakland, this state?"

"Not only t' is state, but in the adjoining county, and the county line is within a few rods of your north

woods!" and his anxiety was beyond any pretense of control. "You remember — the place Gilman inherited! This has been forwarded, it is ten days old."

"Oakland," she repeated, and she grew pale as their eyes met. "Why, it must be the old Waldron place, only four miles away! Lane, I am afraid, afraid! You must go!"

"And leave you?"

"You must! Maum Rosa can help me keep our secret if we are alone, but no one could help me if you were ever seen here. Oh, go, Lane, go at once!"

"Rosa, my watch!"

Rosa came from the child's room, her face ashen with terror, and she touched Sargent's arm in timid, mute appeal, which he did not observe. His eyes and thoughts were only for the woman whose face of dread made his heart ache.

"Listen, dear," he said, looking at the watch, "the down boat passes in an hour. I can go on that. God!" he muttered, taking her in his arms and holding her close, close in a sort of fierce resentment against the fate of things, "to think that the only way I dare protect you is by — deserting you! Monica, Monica!"

"You must go, Lane, you must go!" she whispered, with pale lips.

"Yes," he assented; "Rosa, tell Jim to get my suitcase to the landing, and have his canoe ready to hail the boat. Warn him to avoid strangers if any

should pass—and to take to the woods rather than answer a question."

"Yes, sir, you all can trust Jim," asserted Maum Rosa, confidently—"but"—and she glanced warningly at her mistress—"you can't go now, sir—not just yet! Oh—Miss Mona—"

"Maum Rosa, he has to go, insisted Monica. "Don't be so frightened, you dear old soul! We will get along, now that baby is better. How awful if he had not been," she added, looking at him with wide, frightened eyes—"for you would have to go just the same! I will tell Jim what to do."

Rosa watched her go out, and closed the door carefully after her before she turned her agitated old face to Sargent.

"Mr. Lane," she half whispered, "you can't go now! You got to break the truth to her, and you can't go!"

"The truth?"

She nodded her head and pointed towards the room of the sleeping child.

"Why," and Sargent stared at her, bewildered, "he is better, the doctor said—"

"Mr. Lane, the doctor said he maybe need n't come back again. He did n't have the heart to tell her the truth, she was so happy 'cause her baby was jest a-sleepin'."

"Then—that sleep?"

"Never wake up no more, Mr. Lane, never wake up no more!"

"You mean—"

"No, not yet, but each breath is a little lower—an' a little lower. You won't go now?"

"Of course I shall not go." He entered the room softly, and bent over the little mite of waxen humanity. He could see nothing new or strange in its condition, yet old Rosa was wise in most things.

"You are sure, Maum Rosa?" he asked, as he stooped to kiss the tiny little hand.

"I been a-countin' each breath, Mr. Lane, I'm sure!"

"Don't leave him," he said, lowly, as he went out to meet Monica, who carried his ulster and hat.

"Oh! that blessed boat!" she breathed, with a grateful sigh. "I should be wild if you had to wait until tomorrow—I never did think I could be so glad to get rid of you!"

He took the things she carried and put them aside.

"Never mind those," he said, looking down into her brave, eager eyes, and wondering how he dared bring further pain to her.

"Never mind?" she repeated, wonderingly.

"I mean—we have a full hour before the boat reaches this point. Come here, I was thinking of what you said—that I would have to go, no matter how it was with—with him!"

She nodded her head sadly, and did not speak.

"But listen, dear: a year ago we two were here alone. All the world was very far away, but we never missed it. Suppose the day comes when we again will be only two?"

"What a question!" her brows were wrinkled in perplexity, "and why?"

"The time is so short, dear, so very short!"

"But you said there was a full hour before the boat comes down, and you are nervous!" she said, holding his hand between both her own, "actually nervous, after a whole year, at the thought of parting! You do care for me—so much?"

"So much that love is a torture today!" he burst out, vehemently. "Oh, answer me! If we had life to begin again—we two alone?"

"Don't ask me, Lane! Forget those morbid thoughts of what life would be without him. I can see only that gray world of the dream, it comes back—comes back!"

"I would be there, close beside you, all our lives," he insisted; but she turned and looked at him so strangely that his arms unclasped from about her as he demanded, "What do you mean, Monica?"

"In the gray world of the dream you were not beside me," she said, in a colorless tone, horrible to him. "I was groping onward alone, years, and years—and years!"

"But this is not a world of dreams, it is our world of love!" and again he held her close and lifted her

face, that he could look in her eyes. "What madness is in you that you look and speak like that ever since his life was despaired of, tell me!"

She could not meet his gaze, and broke away from him, white and trembling.

"Oh, Lane, don't ask me, don't ask me! we might both regret—"

"You are afraid of telling me some truth!" he exclaimed, with sudden insight, as he followed her to the closed door and caught her to him half fiercely. "What is it, Monica, what is it?"

"Oh, Lane, let me go! It was only if he had not recovered, but he has, oh—"

"But if he had not—if he does not?"

"Oh—Lane!"

"Answer me!" he commanded.

"Lane, I beg of you—"

"I want the truth," he said, grimly. "If he had died, what did you mean to do?"

And her voice was very low, very steady, as she answered:

"Part from you forever."

He released her then, and stepped back, regarding her in shocked silence.

"I know," she went on, in the same low, even tone, "you will not understand. You are a man, and you think of it for the first time. I have thought of little else for months; but only a woman would know what the thoughts were."

He seemed not to hear. The one big fact was all he could grasp, as he looked at her.

"The love of a year," he said, at last, "and this is the end!"

"The love of a life, you know it!"

"And you would prove it by leaving me?"

"Yes," she said, lifting her head and looking at him for the first time, "I would never again go through the mental torture I have endured this one year. It is not fair to the child or to me. I would never again risk bringing the supreme social curse against a child of mine. If I could bear all the penalty myself?—yes! and never flinch from anything but the fear of losing your love; but not when each blow from the world strikes the child in my arms!"

"Monica! This is folly, madness! You are to be —you are—my wife!"

Again she regarded him with that still, strange look, and her smile hurt him more than tears, as she asked:

"Will you introduce me to your mother with only our child as a certificate of marriage?"

"Monica!"

"You see," she went on, quietly, "you have the same conventional prejudice by which our child is put under a ban. I feel differently. I feel only disgraced by the secrecy. We have hidden our love like criminals until the love itself has become almost criminal in our own feelings!" He attempted to speak, but she shook her head. "Don't attempt to deny it, Lane! I feel that

it is so, and that any sensitive woman would feel the same. If I go now beside you into the world, do you know how I shall feel?—that I am a woman of the twilight, smuggled in on false pretense, and that you will live in dread lest it be discovered! Only the face of our boy, close beside me, could help me endure that. Oh, Lane, I meant to be everything to you, yet—I have only tortured you because I, myself, became so wretched!"

"Half your misery is from imagination," he protested.

"I know it. My imagination slept until I was conscious of a wrong against a helpless child; *I*, who had prided myself on my sense of justice, and ridiculed cowardly people who transgress laws and pity themselves and blame circumstances and invent a Power to forgive their errors! I can't do that. I have been my own good and my own evil angel, and when I transgress I can be my own judge. I can't ask forgiveness, it is an empty word to me. I shall atone to our child by a life of devotion; but—if he had died, I should have atoned to you in a very different way. I should no longer help you condone secret love, or hear you make excuses for courtesans because the world would rank me as their sister."

"How dare you—"

"Oh—I told you I dare be my own judge! Lane," and her tones were suddenly tender, "our ideal of love was perfect, but we chose the wrong path to walk to

it—and our very hearts have been pierced by the thorns on the way."

He stood looking down upon her, the victim of his happiness, knowing so well—too well—that all his love could not shield her from the scourges of her own remorse. He took her hands in his and drew her gently but decidedly up into his arms.

"Monica, you must forget all this," he said, quietly. "It is the madness of a super-sensitive woman. You fancy you have lowered my ideals," he nodded, silently; "never mention that fancy again. There might be a limit to even my patience with your moods."

"I know it," she assented, "there would be; that is as natural a consequence of the moods as the moods are a consequence of my mistakes."

"Our mistakes," he corrected, "and we will remedy them."

"You mean—we will cover them!" she rejoined; "but," and she touched her breast, "here, Lane, is a record that will not be covered up! And when there are children, the record will not even die with our deaths."

"Children; Oh, God!" he whispered, as he held her close and pressed tender, pitiful kisses on her upturned face. "Monica, Monica! My heart aches for you—I don't know how to tell you, but—"

"Hush!" she said, putting her fingers suddenly on his lips. "Listen! Do you not hear?"

The window was open into the garden, and he could only hear the wind sighing through a great pine there, but her ears, trained to the slightest sigh of a sleepless babe, were keener far.

"Horses, more than one," she whispered, "and—voices!"

A note of laughter came to them through the open window, laughter gay and high and—familiar!

He held her in his arms, close, close, while their hearts seemed to cease beating that they might listen.

Then, with a mute appeal for release, she slipped away from him to a window in the alcove, between the parlor and the dining room.

A voice came to them—sweet and clear through the autumn air.

"I certainly shall, why not? It may be only water, and then it might be fresh cider—there is an orchard!"

"Nell!" whispered Monica, as she picked up the ulster and fairly thrust it into his arms. "Here, quickly, through the garden to the river! The hedge will hide you from the road!"

"Monica, I can't leave you now!" he protested. "You don't know—"

"I know the only way you can protect me is by leaving me," she interrupted. "Good-by—kiss me first!"

"Monica!" he whispered, in final appeal, but she put her finger on his lips and went with him stealthily

into the garden, as the knocker of the door sent an alarming clamor through the house.

Maum Rosa, startled, came from the inner room as Monica entered from the garden, closing the door back of her, breathless and intent on every sound.

"Miss Mona!" and the voice of Maum Rosa was almost a wail of protest. "He ain't left you, *now?*"

"Don't you hear?" demanded her mistress, pointing to the door; "his friends and mine. I will have to see them."

"But—" and the distress and bewilderment in the old face was pitiful, "with your baby—"

"You must help me, and they must never guess!" Monica's tones were a command and admitted of no discussion. She moved to the door of the sleeping child and looked in, smiling.

"Poor little sleepy man—left all alone!" she murmured, "but it shan't be long, dearie!" Then she closed the door, softly. "You may let them in now, Rosa; and—if he should awake—if there should be the least sound there, lift him carefully and carry him out along the veranda into Jim's quarters. It won't be for long. Let them in now."

"Oh, Miss Mona!" whispered the old woman, as the knocker again sounded through the house.

"Maum Rosa, don't you hear me?"

And Maum Rosa went through the hall, dazed, trembling, and muttering over and over: "My Lord,

he ain't never told her! My Lord, he ain't never told her!"

Monica glanced about hurriedly, covered the work basket, and closed the desk, as Mrs. Allen entered, tempestuously.

"Well! of all things unexpected!" she exclaimed, embracing Monica and staring round-eyed about her. "If this isn't luck!"

"Why unexpected? Didn't you come to see me?"

"Come to see you! We did not suppose you were nearer than Mexico! My horse went lame; we sent a man back for another and walked across the fields to this road. I was consumed by thirst, and halted to ask for a drink of anything, even water—and there was Maum Rosa!"

"You are not alone?" asked Monica.

"Alone, good gracious, no! It is Gillie's housewarming party. Nanny is here, and Fan, and Lulu; but Lulu and Joe got lost from the bunch quite a ways back. You were invited!"

"I think not. You see—I have been rather a bit of driftwood, and not in touch with friends to any great extent."

"Well, I know an invitation was sent you, care of some art club," asserted Mrs. Allen. "But I must go and tell the others or they will all hate me!"

"Certainly, tell them," suggested Monica, as Nell fluttered out again along the hall, and then she turned

to the frightened Rosa. "Can't you find something more refreshing than water, Maum Rosa? Make anything for them," she insisted. "Do anything—get them all in before the boat comes down!"

She gave Rosa no time to reply, but followed Nell to the entrance, where she was joyously greeted by a group, known and unknown friends of Gilman's, who were exclaiming over the beauty of the old dwelling, the latticed windows, the wealth of rose vines, and the backing of giant cedars and moss-draped cypress trees.

They came in gladly, filling her little parlor and library and venturing out on the veranda. Tony and Nanny Allen found the old piano in the alcove and proceeded to try it, and the whole place was transformed by a busy, chatty group, suggesting Manhattan much more than the piney woods of Georgia.

"The fact is," confided Gilman, "you are a godsend, Madame Monica! It is not so easy as one might fancy to find amusement in the country for a group of people accustomed to the news of Gotham at their breakfast table. You see, I'm so new I don't even know the county roads, and you're a native, aren't you?"

"So far as birth makes me so, yes; but I know the land almost as little as you. In fact," she added, "I have come here only at long intervals when I wanted absolute retreat, and I slip away again before the peo-

ple of the region know I am here. My mother's family are all gone, and I have made no acquaintances. I can't help you even a little bit."

"But let me send a carriage for you this evening—join our party!" he pleaded.

"Not possible now," she said, smilingly; "you are a few days too late. I must leave for the north the first boat I—can get ready for. The little steamers are my only means of reaching a railroad from here. It is much more isolated than your big plantation."

"It's ideal!" decided Gilman. "It beats my place—in fact, it is almost romantic. How ideally restful to live where railroads are unknown, and the steam whistles of commerce never penetrate!"

"Boats have whistles, and bells, too," reminded Mrs. Allen. "I heard a whistle across here before my horse went lame. Was that at your landing?"

Rosa, who was offering glasses of lemonade and slices of cake to the ladies, almost let fall the tray at the question. Her mistress caught the silver cake basket, and steadied the old woman with a look.

"It might have been here," she replied. "There are several points where they can run in, but no wharf or regular stopping places."

From a window looking across the hedge to the grass-grown, old road, Tony Allen turned with a long whistle and upraised hands.

"Stop—pause—and listen!" he admonished them.

"The lost is found! The wanderer has wandered along the river trail and is wondering now how we all happened to be waiting for him here!"

"Tony, you get crazier every minute," remarked Tony's wife between bites of cake. "What are you sing-songing about?"

"Lane Sargent, the lagging guest," he stated, promptly. "Some of the boys have been down to the landing and there they come with him."

"Tony, you must be mistaken."

"No mistake about it," called Gilman, jubilantly, from the window. "There he is, the boys carrying his traps."

"How strange," murmured Monica to Mrs. Smythe-Orville. "Did your party expect him to come by this slow route?"

"I understood that the invitation was not even acknowledged," replied that lady; "but it is an interesting coincidence, good enough for your note-book, Mr. Gilman."

"Monica, let me call him in," suggested Nell, and, as there was a slight hesitation, she slipped her arm around Monica's waist. "Oh, I know you never cared to have him around," she half whispered that the others might not hear, "but he really is a splendid fellow; do let me."

"Why—certainly," said Monica at last, and the long sigh seemed to Mrs. Smythe-Orville, who was watching her, to be one of utter weariness or extreme

boredom. It was really almost rude to everyone concerned. She never could understand how the Tony Allens were so devoted to a woman who so seldom exerted herself to be agreeable.

While the others had gone to the windows, or followed Nell, Monica walked to the window seat nearest the closed door, where her very heart seemed centered. She had for a moment a wave of faintness come over her, and through it the gay, laughing visitors seemed as faraway, shadowy people, and the only real thing was what the door guarded — the closed door which she must not leave — the closed door!

A sharp fear drove away the faintness, the fear of slipping into unconsciousness there and leaving no one on guard — no one to —

"Monica!" and Nell whirled back into the hall, "that laggard appears absolutely unwilling to intrude so unceremoniously; pleads dust and general unfitness. Now, how could one be dusty on a river trip? *I* think," and she lowered her voice, discreetly, "that he imagines you still retain that silly antipathy you used to show occasionally. Do you?"

"How absurd, Nell! I simply knew the man was not going to be my cousin, so — I —"

She ended with a slight upward smile, and allowed Nell to interrupt her by a characteristic shake of her shoulder.

"Oh, you wise one!" she taunted. "May I say you insist?"

"Any reasonable thing to please you, dear," agreed Monica, and wondered — wondered that none of them read in her tones or her face that their laughter sounded as from outside of her world. They seemed to belong all together, and at times so far away that great stretches of space whirled between. She thought of the great curve of the wave under which she had once been drawn — and from which he had brought her safe. What could he do for her now?

At the window Nell was calling to Sargent that Monica insisted that he come in, and he lifted his cap and nodded assent, though halted to shake hands with Lulu and Joe, who had just ridden up. There were shouts of joy and incredulity as they dismounted and caught hold of him.

At the window of the dining room Tony Allen stood for a moment beside his wife.

"I did not hear her insisting, Nell," he remarked. "To tell the truth I wish the trap would come. She doesn't look exactly well to me, and even an extra unexpected guest —"

"Silly! She was always rather pale, you know, and as to Lane — he was half in love with her in New York — and more than half afraid of her!"

"Then why encourage — ?"

"Encourage! Oh, she always snubbed him and sent him about his business; quite right, of course, but we want to see if a year of separation has worn out his fancy!"

"We, who?"

"Fan and I."

"Oh, you girls," murmured Tony, leaving her to join Monica and Gilman, as Lulu ran in breathless and excited.

"Oh, my dear, dearest Monica! Isn't this the most wonderful ever? And here is Mr. Sargent. We found him in the road, and Joe is coming, oh—"

Her delight was expressed in a final hug, and, thus embraced, Monica offered her one free hand to McLane Sargent in her usual, cool, sweet manner.

"My little camp is especially favored today," she remarked. "It is wonderful that Mr. Gilman and I never chanced to learn that our garden patches were in the same region!"

"Now, my boy," declared Gilman, after shaking hands with his latest guest, "I have not asked you a question, but this coincidence goes on record—it's unique. We thought Madam Monica on some foreign shore—a horse goes lame, and we hobble across some fields to discover a cottage in the grove, and the lady in her own ingle nook! I send a letter to you, and instead of following my directions as to transportation, you conclude to try the primitive river way, get a bit bungled as to the landing—a five-mile bungle—and are suddenly surrounded by the friends you meant to surprise! How is that for coincidence—and insight?"

"Remarkable," agreed Sargent, as Gilman indus-

triously made notes in one of his ever ready books. "I wonder that phrenologist did not disclose the fact that you were gifted with second sight."

"Lulu!" said Mrs. Smythe-Orville, reprovingly, "you are not to go out of sight of the rest when you next accompany the riding party. Mr. Gilman was quite disturbed about you."

"But we were only lost for an hour or so, and—" she added, slipping her hand into Sargent's. "I want to tell Mr. Sargent all about it."

"Don't monopolize him," suggested her stepmother; "he has scarcely had time to greet all his friends."

But Lulu held to Sargent's hand until Mrs. Smythe-Orville had followed Nell into the alcove, where Nanny Allen was playing old-time airs softly, and as Monica was about to join them the girl held out her other hand, appealingly.

"Don't go," she whispered. "I—I want to tell you, too. You and Mr. Sargent were our very best friends and we'll need you now to stand by us, for I have something to surprise you—Joe!"

After shaking hands with Monica, Joe had sat quietly at the window, but turned at the call, smiling dubiously.

"Oh, Joe is in it, is he?" asked Monica.

"Rather! he is It!—my surprise."

The two young things stood, half shy, and wholly proud, facing the man and woman whom they had trusted most, and the woman's eyes were touched by

quick tears as she drew the girl to her, fondly. Sargent reached his hand to Joe, and the young lovers, glowing in their own joy, did not even note the silence of the two.

"It is lovely to be able to tell you two first of all (oh, this perfectly wonderful day!)" breathed Lulu, "for your advice saved us from something very foolish once. The laws down here are more lenient to elopers, and I am a year older, and so—"

"I'm going to tell Gilman," announced Joe.

"Yes, let's," agreed Lulu. "He will have to break it to mama on the way home."

The two approached the window to reconnoiter from that point of vantage the group in the alcove where Nanny was playing "Nellie Gray" and Nell was humming:

> Oh, my darling Nellie Gray,
> They have taken you away,
> And I'll never see my darling any more;
> They have taken her to Georgia
> To wear her life away—

Monica slipped into a chair by the desk as the two children left them together. Sargent's face was set and white as he looked down on her.

"Be brave a little longer, a very little longer," he muttered. "Surely they must go soon, but—those women are watching you!"

She straightened in her chair, and Nell, from the alcove, could see that her upturned face was smiling at

him; a bit of the old mockery was in the smile, and from a lower shelf of the desk she drew out a portfolio.

"Really, you are too modest," she remarked. "It is not the first time feminine eyes have turned your way, nor will it be the last. But since you are here, would you care to look at some of my late sketches? I don't think I ever inflicted them upon you in the North. That is a pretty cove I love on the Pacific coast; this was the favorite nook of a friend who was with me. If you have never been along that southern shore you should certainly go — it is delightful at the right season. And these"— she smiled up at him again as she removed some sketches and slipped them in a drawer —"oh, they are only portrait sketches of the same friend. It is perhaps unwise to sketch always from the same model."

"Monica!"

She gave him a quick glance of warning as Nell, and Tony, and Mrs. Smythe-Orville approached, and he turned to them with one of the drawings.

"Charming, are they not?"

"They certainly are," decided Nell. "I knew you and your brushes were not idle wherever you were, though I must say you look as if you need a holiday. Apropos of drawings, Lane, ever find your ideal woman, the *Twilight* artist?"

"Still looking for her," he confessed.

"Really? That the reason you are still a bachelor?"

"One of them." Then he nodded towards Tony, who was asking Monica to go out with him to look at a new saddle horse. "Your husband is the other!"

"Oh, very pretty; but, Lane, you are a false pretense," she retorted, while the others laughed, and under cover of their gaiety Monica met his eyes meaningly as she passed him with Tony going to the alcove window. He walked up near the closed door and stood looking out into their garden of dreams. The irony of life had never seemed so bitter, or the strength of mere human things so trivial when pitted against the fates.

If he had only dared open that door, and see—

Gilman spoke to him of the conveyance to the plantation. A cart was to come back to the cross-roads. One of the men had ridden on to meet it and send it to the cotage; it would hold his suit case, and if Sargent would drive Mrs. Allen home in it—

Nanny was playing "Dixie," while some of the others were trying to sing it, and again he found himself speaking civilly and smiling bitterly at the horrible irony of it all, going with Nell—leaving *her* alone in their whirlpool of the fates—and driving beside Nell—gay, careless, yet worldly wise Nell—back to the social joys of a rollicking housewarming party! He seemed a part of some hideous nightmare, where every horror of his own suffering was doubled and trebled

by the agony he had to witness in her heart, the wild despair from which he could not save her and in which he dared not openly share!

"I, myself, am Heaven and Hell!" The old, old words of Omar came to him with a new meaning. Heaven! Yes, the gods themselves had nothing to tempt with that was stronger, deeper, sweeter than the wild love they had known, and had dared to claim in their own way; yes, their Heaven had been theirs for a space, and now—

Were the gods jealous that the Hell was sent so quickly?

If only he dared know what was going on behind that closed door! Or if only that conveyance would come and give her freedom to see him once alive—if only for one little, little minute! He seemed to live through her heartaches of all the future years if it should not be so.

Gilman was still talking amiably about his new plantation and his new plans, and Lulu and Joe were lingering near, waiting for a chance to confess their latest escapade without interrupting his monologue.

At last Joe edged around to the window seat, holding Lulu's hand, brazenly, and Gilman looked over his glasses at them, questioning and sardonic.

"Ah, our lost youth on the one-eyed nag! Did you get her blind eye to the road and lose the way?"

"Nope," and Joe handed forth a folded document slipped to him by Lulu.

"I rather think," observed Sargent, pointing to the paper, "that he got on the blind side of the rest of you."

"Shades of Julius Cæsar!" and Gilman regarded the two culprits, frowningly. "You—and you! And with a one-eyed nag, the only animal safe enough for Romeo to ride! Don't I insist there is no longer any real romance in life? This situation—an elopement, should be romantic. Is it? Not by any manner of means. It's a wonder you did not thrust this at me in a frame."

"Hadn't time," said the bridegroom.

"Or you would?" and Gilman threw up his hands at this final evidence of the non-romantic spirit.

"Now, now, dear, good Mr. Gilman!" and Lulu was using all her blandishments of tone and caressing hand and pleading eye, "you can help the romance of it beautifully by breaking the news to mama—easy—on the way home. She can't have hysterics on horseback!"

"A nice part of the work you have laid out for me, you young schemers. But since the mischief occurred at my place, I'll feel responsible until I see you settled in life. And your poor mama—" Then he checked himself to stare hard at the girl. "Jove! that reminds—you led her to think—"

"Now, dearest Mr. Gilman! You'll console mama, won't you?"

"Will I? Guess I'll have to ask your poor mama to console me."

"Now?" demanded Lulu, round-eyed, as he started towards the alcove. He halted and looked over his glasses at her in mock ferocity.

"No, I'll break it to her easy, on the way home, where she can't have hysterics."

Lulu whirled gleefully around the room in a mad gallop to the air of the *varsouvienne,* with Joe as a lagging partner, while she whispered:

"Hysterics! His bank account will cure them, Joe."

Then she checked her unsatisfactory attempts at the dance, and, trying in vain to get the step, rushed into Monica.

"Do show me," she begged; "you know all those old-fashioned dances. I never can get it started right alone—this part."

Monica turned, feverishly eager for any distraction from the suspense of waiting—waiting for them to go!

"It is so very easy—slower, Nânny—like this."

From the other room Sargent could see her in the witchery of the old dance. The others were applauding as Lulu stepped back and the graceful figure in red and white danced the stately measures alone.

And he—he could only watch in silence while the nails of his clenched hands cut into his own palms, and he knew himself in the toils of the fates their love had laughed at! He dared not approach her, he dared

scarcely look at her. He sat alone with the portfolio of drawings and moved them about mechanically and saw the mocking nooks of a land where their happiness had been hidden — and knew that behind the closed door —

Then the closed door opened, and Maum Rosa came out, looking gray and old, and her hands trembling as she saw the dance and touched Sargent's arm.

"For God's sake!" she breathed, chokingly, "Mr. Lane, get them folks out of this house!"

"You mean — already?"

She nodded, speechlessly, and he noticed the untouched glasses of lemonade brought in on his arrival.

"Give her this," he muttered between his teeth. "Stop that dance!"

The dance was already at its close, and Monica, refusing the enthusiastic encore, accepted the glass offered her. Lulu took the other from the tray, and there was much gay chatter over dances, old and new.

Sargent, white and desperate, joined them, glancing out of the window for the promised conveyance, and, seeing no signs of it, turned to Monica.

"May we have permission to invade your garden, Mrs. Wayne?" he asked, as a last hope of getting them all out of the room; "the view from here is charming and unusual."

"Certainly, take possession of it — all of you. You

may find it quaint, but there are only very old-fashioned roses and lilies—insignificant things."

Her glance met his as the others trooped out, led by Nell and Gilman. Sargent lingered until all had gone through the glass door and their calls of joy came back concerning the arbors, and the sun dial, and the wonders of late bloom.

"Go!" she murmured, as she leaned against the door frame, utterly exhausted. "Go, take them far, and—keep them there."

"Monica!" he whispered, all the plea of his heart in his voice and eyes, "I can't, I can't leave you now!"

"Miss Mona, Miss Mona—quick!" moaned old Rosa, at the closed door, and Monica straightened, terrified at the face of the nurse.

"Maum Rosa?"

"Monica!" called Lulu from the garden, "may we have some of these wonderful lilies?"

"Help yourselves!" she answered, as she went swiftly to Rosa, who grasped her hand, pitifully.

"And roses, too?" called Nell.

"And roses, too; all you like—all of them! Oh, Lane, go, go, and—keep them there!"

Reluctantly he stepped out, closing the glass door behind him. The others were already too far in the garden to hear a smothered scream in that closed room.

But he heard it, yet dared not turn back.

And behind the closed door Monica knelt by the

bed, and threw off wildly the restraining hand of the old nurse.

"It is not true!" she insisted. "He is not dying, he can't be! Sleepy boy! Baby!"

"Miss Mona! for God's sake!"

"It is not true, I tell you! Baby—come! look at me—Baby!"

She gathered the little white form hungrily into her arms, and stood erect, defiantly.

"It is not true!" she insisted, and, opening the door, walked out, with old Maum Rosa clinging to her, helplessly.

Sargent saw Rosa slip the white curtain quickly across the window as a shield, and knew what had happened. In three strides he was back, inside the room.

"Oh, Mr. Lane, make her go back! make her go back!" moaned the old woman, as she shot fast the bolt of the garden door and then the door into the hall and stood, a black sentinel of faithfulness, watching the garden.

He stood still inside the door and looked into the eyes of the woman he adored—the bereft mother—and was silent before the agony there. After what seemed a long time he whispered, "Monica!"

She stared at him as if she had been waiting a lifetime for his voice, and then fell on her knees by the window seat, the child in her arms resting on the cushion, and looked up at him, appealingly.

"She said—oh, Lane—it is not true! she said he—was dying! our baby, my baby—was dying! Oh—little sleepy man—wake up! Baby—Baby!"

Sargent knelt beside her, and drew her close while he lifted the tiny white hand of the child to his lips.

"Monica," he said, brokenly, with his lips against her cheek. "Monica, he is no longer—dying!"

She arose to her feet, staring at the little body on the window seat, and stepped backwards as if unconscious of her movement.

He clasped her to him, but it was only a dazed look she gave as he whispered, "Monica!"

Outside Lulu and Joe, far down under the cypress trees, were singing lustily:

> In Dixie Land I take my stand!
> I live and die in Dixie Land,
> Look away! Look away!
> Look away down south in Dixie!

And nearer, under the oleanders, was heard the sweet, highly-tuned note of Mrs. Smythe-Orville.

"Is Mr. Sargent playing truant from our holiday?"

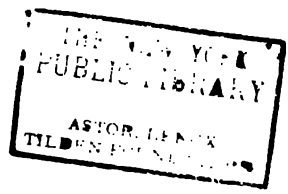
He clasped her more closely, while his tears wet her cheeks, but her eyes were dry.

And nearer came a voice they were each fond of in a way—the voice of Nell.

"Where is he, anyway? Lane! Lane! come and cut roses for us!"

"Roses!" whispered Monica, in his arms as she

"He is no longer—dying"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gently drew herself apart; "roses!—your world is waiting for you—there!"

"My world," and he strove to hold her again in his arms, "my world is here with you—and him!"

She put him aside with one eloquent gesture.

"Do not speak," she said, as she lifted the child from the window seat. "Words! words! words! words! we said them all, not an hour ago—there!"

"Lane Sargent!" called Nell, imperatively, from the garden.

"You hear!" said Monica, evenly, lowly. "They are calling you. Your world—a man's world—is calling you!"

"Monica! Now, when you need me most! need care, need protection—"

"The only protection you can give me is to leave me," she said, clasping the little dead body to her breast. "We have dared all their conventions, we have lived out all of our theory of life, and it brings us—here! Kiss me! For the last time—good-by!"

"Monica! Monica!" he cried, with all his heart in his voice as his kisses fell on her face and the tiny face of their dead child—"Monica!"

"That is over—now," she said, in the same even, tearless way. "It is all over, and they are calling you—out there—out in our garden of love! They are calling you there—you!"

Her eyes in fond, bewildered questioning were still on the face of the child as she stepped backwards, and

Sargent stared at her incredulous, half-awed, half-stunned, as she turned from him, and the door closed behind her.

"Monica—Querida!" he called, softly, as he sought to follow her.

Then he heard a bolt slipping into place, and he fell on his knees by the door.

"Monica, open the door for me—Monica!"

He could hear the sound of a woman sobbing within, but no answer. Rosa, at the alcove, came over to him and touched him on the shoulder, pityingly.

"It ain't no use, Mr. Lane," she said, trembling with the effort at self-control. "What she is goin' through can't be argued with. It's deeper than a man can gauge! The onliest help you can give is the lookin' after these quality folks in the garden—they're a-comin' back!"

She unfastened the two doors as Nell and Mrs. Smythe-Orville were visible coming back through the shrubbery, their hands full of roses.

When they entered Rosa had disappeared in the alcove, and Sargent stood at the window facing the garden.

"Well! there is no accounting for tastes," remarked Mrs. Allen. "The idea of enjoying garden sweets at long range!"

He glanced over his shoulder at them, and smiled, but did not turn.

"Supposing that I wanted perspective for my

picture, and feared to have the ideal vanish if I went a step too near?"

Mrs. Allen made a mocking bow.

"As we were part of the picture," she observed, "you are forgiven. I always did love a clever liar! But I thought I heard wheels on the road."

Joe came tumultuously through the garden door, loaded with blossoms, a rose in his cap.

"Your chariot is waiting, Mrs. Allen, and this lucky genius is to be your cavalier," he announced.

"He *is* lucky," observed Mrs. Smythe-Orville.

"Yes, very," commented Sargent.

"That is pretty," decided Mrs. Allen. "If you are sorry for yourself—"

"On the contrary," he said, as he lifted his hat and ulster from the window seat, "I congratulate myself! May a man not sigh at the briefness of a happiness—to be your cavalier only for an hour?"

Nell Allen looked at him with a quizzical smile, and shook her head.

"I told you I loved a clever liar, Lane," she returned, "but you are always puzzling to me when you please me too well."

"Nevertheless," he said, smiling lightly, "I am at your service, Madam."

Lulu, Tony, and the others came trooping in, responding to the whistle of Joe on the veranda. All were laden with greenery and flowers, and Tony sported an immense daisy in his buttonhole.

"You are a sight with that sunflower," observed Nell. "Where is Monica?"

"She may be in the front of the house," suggested Sargent. "The horses are waiting; had we not better start?"

"Go and see, Tony," said Tony's better half. "And where is Gillie?"

"Oh, he is crazy over the garden, and is making a thousand notes," said Lulu, turning to Sargent. "Really, you know, it is the prettiest ever! Just a dream place."

"I'll go look for him," he said, with a desperate hope of getting them all off the grounds quickly. But he looked to see that Maum Rosa was on guard before he went out through the garden door.

Lulu drew Nanny Allen into the alcove and was whispering her dearest secret into her ear, whereupon they both began playing the wedding march softly, and with much whispered accompaniment.

Maum Rosa, who had been watching the restless horses in front of the house; noted the equally restless attitude of Mrs. Allen, to whom Mrs. Smythe-Orville was whispering.

"I—I reckon, Miss Elinor," she ventured at last, "I reckon Miss Mona had a headache from that dance, and has laid down for a spell and fell asleep. She ain't been so special vigorous this last year."

Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Smythe-Orville exchanged glances as Rosa went back to her former station at the

alcove window. From there she could keep the door of Monica's in full view, besides remaining in sight and hearing of the visiting group.

"Well, where is she?" asked Mrs. Smythe-Orville, when Rosa was safely out of hearing.

"Vanished on account of Lane Sargent, *I* think," answered Nell. "Do you notice his anxiety to get away?"

"But, why — ?"

"Oh, he 's been silly enough to let her know he cares for her!" said Nell, disgustedly. "I knew he would some day, though he had n't a ghost of a chance — might just as well make love to Miss Liberty in the upper bay. I suppose she has frozen him forever, and shut herself out of sight."

"Well, shall we go?"

"Certainly not. If all the men who make harmless love to one had to be exiled, what would become of society?"

Tony, at the hall door, shouted that the horses were getting restless, but his wife settled herself back among the cushions.

"You can save your breath, Tony boy," she observed. "I shan't stir until I have seen Monica!"

Then the bolt of the closed door was heard slide back, and Monica entered, closing the door behind her, and standing with her back to it for a moment as if resting against it, her hands behind her.

She had put aside the vivid belt and bolero and was

all in white, and her still face was that of a statue in which only the eyes seemed alive, the eyes of gray-shadowed flame!

"Oh, Monica, were you resting?" asked Nell, eagerly. "Is your head better?"

"I"—she put her hand over her eyes for a moment and then let it fall, listlessly—"I—scarcely know."

"You do look as if we had been too much for you," stated Nell, wheeling forward a chair and almost forcing her into it. "You are cold as ice! You simply must come over to Oaklands with us, and let me take care of you."

Monica smiled and shook her head—the idea of being cured at Oaklands! Sargent came in from the garden, and stood at the door, silent, to hear her answer.

"To go to Oaklands will not be possible. I leave—for Manhattan—tomorrow."

"So sorry you are not to be with us," murmured Mrs. Smythe-Orville. "Good-by, had a lovely time; come, Lulu!"

"But Monica," persisted Nell, "I've a thousand things to talk about. Glyn is going downhill on a toboggan, and—"

"Don't talk about that; it does not interest me. I am not strong enough to help him."

"Help him? No one expects you to! I only mean that you need not hide in out-of-the-way corners as

you have done for the last year. He won't come back."

"Don't talk about him," said Monica again. "He gave me his name, you know!"

Sargent, at the door, heard and turned white.

"Well, if you feel that way about it, I'm mum, of course," declared Nell, "but everyone else is talking of it, if you are not; also your little protegé, Hettie, is getting along famously with that beautiful Sister Teresa. A lot of us send our orders for embroidery and drawn work there just for the sake of looking at her; she is so very unusual."

"Yes," agreed Monica, "she is. She is wonderful, I think—wonderful through her faith—and work."

"Shall we find you in the same cozy studio when we get back to little old New York?" asked Tony, and again Sargent listened—he who dare ask her none of the intimate questions allowed to the others!

"I think not," she said, with a certain shrinking at the thought. "I—I have made no plans."

From the flowers brought from the garden and piled on the center table, Nell selected a red rose to match the one in her bodice, and called Sargent to come and be decked for the sacrifice.

"If you are to be my cavalier, you must wear my colors," she decided. "I am sure you never wore so fragrant a garden rose."

"Never," he agreed, appreciatively, and looked over Nell's head to Monica with a mute appeal in his

eyes. Their roses—the roses of their love garden!

Gilman came in bubbling with enthusiasm, a notebook in each hand.

"That garden is a wonder," he declared, "a wonder! As many different kinds of singing birds as there are blossoms. I've made notes of them all!"

"Gillie, we've been waiting a month for you," called Tony from the door.

"Can't help it, just plain witchery down there among the cypresses! Good-by, Madam Monica, enchanting princess of the enchanting garden! If I had not sworn off modern romance, convinced myself that there was no more of real romance in the modern life than there is real tragedy in it, that garden would have been a temptation. It's poetic, that garden is—live oaks and lilies, roses and cypress trees, and birds—you remember that bird in Dacy's garden—the one with the broken wing?"

He flipped over the pages of the little book marked "Nature Notes" in vain, and at the reminder of that evening—the first evening—Monica looked across at Sargent.

"You mean the bird deceived by the transparency of the glass until it dreamed it could fly harmless through the unseen barriers? Yes, I remember! Poor bird with the broken wing!"

"That's the one," agreed Gilman. "You said the experience might give it a new note for its song."

"But," and this time she dared not meet Sargent's

pained, compelling eyes, "Mr. Sargent reminded us that the wider range of feeling would scarcely make amends for its crippled life."

"So he did," agreed Gilman. "I made a note of it at the time. There was a poem in that incident."

"I can't see it," decided the practical Nell, who was arranging an immense sheaf of blossoms pleasing to her. "Your poetic bird was a little fool; it had eyes to see."

"And," added Monica, falteringly, "since it had eyes to see, its transgressions be — upon its own head!"

No one but Sargent noticed how heavily she leaned on the back of the chair from which she had arisen, or that her eyes were turned on the table of flowers beside her and avoided the groups of departing guests. From the mass of bloom she lifted one white rose — their world-old symbol of secrecy! as Tony appeared with a last despairing appeal to Gilman that he help herd his guests to horse.

"Oh, eh, yes! my fault entirely," he agreed, as he crowded forward with the others for a good-by to Monica. "Enchanted Princess of the enchanted garden — until we meet again!"

"Oh, shoo! get along, all of you," insisted Tony, whose restless horse was a new and well-beloved pet. "Forward, march!"

"We can't march without music," protested Lulu, and then in a low, suggestive undertone she called, "Nanny!"

Nanny Allen, all a-joy over the new love scheme concluded in their midst, slipped back into the alcove, and crashed out the triumphant notes of a wedding march with which to start the young couple on their homeward journey.

Gilman, with a sunflower as a baton, offered his hand in mock ceremony to Mrs. Smythe-Orville and led the procession out. Joe whistled, and Lulu sang, until the others outside took up the air, and it floated back to Monica where she stood, still, and a little pale, with only Nell and Nell's escort left, and Nell was repeating, coaxingly:

"Do come tomorrow!"

"I—cannot," she answered, lowly, schooling her voice not to scream at the mad mockery of that wedding march being sung now—now—now! "It is not possible, Nell; good-by for a month!"

Nell kissed her and tapped her with a red rose in pettish reproof, and even as she said good-by was conscious that Sargent had not once spoken—and was waiting.

As she reached the door she saw him go closer to Monica, holding out his hand—which was not taken.

"Good-by, for—how long?" he said, lowly.

"Forever."

"Monica!" he protested.

But she imposed silence by the white rose lifted to her lips, and he stepped back, conscious of the eyes of Nell, and the uselessness of words.

"*Adios,*" she said, softly, and then, as he turned to join Nell, she added the refrain of the old Spanish love song, "*Por siempre—adios!*"

He looked at her, cold, and still, and white, with all the fragrance of the blossoms about her.

Outside was the mockery of the wedding march whistled and sung for their parting.

It reached her where she stood—alone!

He followed Nell with a mist of tears in his eyes, and she, for a wonder, ceased to be amused at what she had thought a little comedy. Lane was certainly harder hit than she had fancied—and, of course, it was of no use at all! Monica never would care for anything but her work. Nell was quite convinced that they might have had Monica along with the party if Lane Sargent had not arrived at that particular moment. Monica never had cared much for Lane—curious!

So she was rather silent, for her, on the way home, and held her great sheaf of bloom carefully lest it be injured, and pointed out to him occasionally special beauties among the many, until he was frantic with longing for every nook where they grew—the nooks of their love garden—never to be forgotten.

At midnight a lone horseman rode under the stars to that garden and found only a little grave by the white rose arbor—and a fond, faithful old black woman, who wept at his questions and shook her head.

"She laid him there among the white flowers with her own hands, Mr. Lane, an' never shed a tear! Then she gets ready, as quiet as a ghost woman, an' goes away with Jim in the canoe jest as the river's a-gettin' dark under the trees. No, sir, she ain't leavin' a word for anybody—not even you, Mr. Lane."

"Of course, Maum Rosa, she knows I'll follow her."

"I reckon she knows you'll—try to. But a canoe along the black water in the night-time ain't easy trailin', Mr. Lane. She has nigh six hours start, an' Jim could throw a blood houn' off the trail in less 'n that time. No, sir; she ain't allowin' to be found. She said down there at the edge of the river that her ships were burned, an' she was leavin' her heart back here in the rose garden. Then—then she went out on that gray water jest like a white ghost of a girl into the twilight."

CHAPTER XXI

THE Tony Allens did not meet Sargent again for six months, and then it was in Santa Barbara that they turned a corner in an old plaza and literally fell on his neck with joy.

"Do come along with us down the coast," Nell begged. "You owe us something, for we started out on the strength of your Mexican story, expecting all the old-time Spanish life in every mission town."

"Yes, and all we have struck is a fine collection of 'native sons' with a Yankee or middle west background," declared Tony, "and all the priests are Irish!"

"You have to cut out the regular tourist route if you want the old Mexican life," advised Sargent.

"We have a dandy new car, and a few dozens of letters to leading citizens. Going down to the Mexican line before we turn. We'll be good and let you work, dig, and slave, if you will only come along and be pilot."

And to their surprise, he consented.

Under his direction they evaded the scheduled route of the average Anglo-Saxon, and took to the byways, where the old picturesque life of the Mexican does still exist in little, seldom seen, hamlets.

And under pepper trees and palms and past fragrant orchards they sped south and ever south, while Nell upbraided him as an absconder from their midst, and told him all the gossip of their set, and praised his new book, while she scolded him for refusing such an excellent dramatic offer for *Twilight.*

"Just throwing oodles of money away, Lane," she sighed. "I can't see how you have the heart to do it."

"Oh, it's rather a nuisance to be tied in New York for theatrical reasons just when all this is calling one" —and he waved his hand to the wide ranges where all the colors of the rainbow were literally reproduced in the glow of flowering things.

"You are as impractical as Monica Wayne," decided Nell, "and beyond that there are no words. None of us have seen her since that day in Georgia. Glyn is partly paralyzed, and lawyers on both sides are trying in vain to locate her. He is over there with a lot of harpies, and all she would need to do is walk in, shoo them away, and take possession. But she answers no letters, and never comes back. Isn't that the limit?"

"It would seem so."

"Glyn thinks she has joined some sisterhood for good and all; but I don't know. I can't quite see Monica like that. Anyway, she is doing her work, wherever she is, for there is a new window of hers announced as ready at an early date, so those church managers must know where she is."

"Why are you always fussing about her when she

doesn't care a picayune about any of us?" demanded Tony. "I admire her tremendously, but if she elects to cut the entire family, what is the use of fretting? She knows what she wants — or doesn't want."

"I know, Tony," agreed his wife, "you are perfectly right, but we were such chums. I was so fond of her, and one can't be very fond of Monica and ever forget her. One can criticise, and wonder, and disapprove, and decide that, though she is a genius, she lacks common sense — I can do all these things by the day, or the week, but — I can't forget her!"

"Well, Nell," said Tony, consolingly, "I guess she was fond enough of you, too; I'm sure she was. But when Wayne came over here and stirred up trouble, and all his relatives argued that she ought to go back to him and take care of his money, she simply decided to drop out entirely. It was about the only way she could get a chance at work."

"Yes, and work was all she ever really did care a minute for," agreed Nell.

So Sargent sat beside them and heard all Nell's fond imaginings over the loss of her — Nell, who could do all things, except — forget her!

And then they whirled down through a mission valley to the sea, and Nell exclaimed over the beauty of the ruin of the century old church set like a jewel in the green velvet of the ranges.

"Really, and truly, Lane, isn't this the valley of your book?" she demanded, as she gazed in admiration

at the carving of the stone and the stateliness of the great chancel. "I am sure of it from the illustrations —yet if it *is n't* don't tell me. I would rather keep my belief."

He only smiled, and let her keep her little doubtful mystery of it, while Tony fished in his pocket for his lists of towns and letters.

"This is Galvez's town," he decided. "I have a letter to him from a railroad mogul and a priest, so you two can moon around this pile of rocks while I locate him."

Señor Carlos Galvez was at San Luis Rey, but his wife, Doña Maria, read the letter of the priest, and made offer of all hospitality if the *Señores* and the *Señora* would wait over a few days. It might be that Don Carlos would return that week; but there was a cousin marrying a girl at San Luis Rey, and there would be a barbecue, and next week the wedding party would be here in San Juan; and if the *Americanos* would be pleased to stay over—

But the *Americanos* were content to sit under the palm tree in the patio and drink glasses of rich mission wine and hear the history of how a cask of it had been lost for thirty years in the old secret cellar and then found again. The glass of wine was all they could accept, as they were going south after supper, and perhaps they might make San Luis Rey in time for the barbecue.

Then Nell and Tony slipped away to arrange for

supper at the little Mexican inn, and Sargent, left behind, listened to the directions for locating Don Carlos among the many cousins, and tried to see some trace of the hard beauty of the slender Maria in this fat, placid, material matron, whose life had been a success since at twenty-five she was the social head of the mission valley, quite as her husband was the business head—that is, in the Mexican circle—for, of course, American ranch people did not count.

It was a pity, she thought, that the American *Señores* had not come a few weeks earlier, even two weeks, for the rodeos had been fine, and it had been a good season for the horses.

"Years ago I was in your valley," remarked Sargent, "but it was the day of the accident to your father, and I met none of your family. I remember that day seeing a beautiful horse here, a palomino. A young girl rode it, a quite young girl of long braids and a red banda—pardon, but was she not of your household?"

"So many people asking of that girl, that Querida!" and the tone of Doña Maria scarcely veiled her contempt. "Are you people?" and she glanced again at the letter of the priest, "are you people perhaps some more lawyers?"

"Indeed, no; not a lawyer among us."

"Well, they did come, lawyers!" said Doña Maria, with slight patience. "Yes, that Querida was like you said, of our household, and it has made a disgrace

to us. She was heretic always, and she marry with a rich *Americano* and went away—a very rich *Americano* who lives in Europe. But she was not wise, that Querida; always she was smart, but not wise, and she would not live with the man she was married with, though it was said he had barrels and even carts full of money. The lawyers try to make it that she live with him, but she goes away and they never can find her. The lawyer told Don Carlos of that trouble. It was surely great disgrace, but always she was like that, so clever—but not so wise!"

"And she never comes here?"

"Once she come, last winter. One day she rides over the ranges with the old Indios, and then she was gone again—and no one sees her any more."

"And the beautiful palomino?"

"My Carlos has always hated that horse," said Doña Maria, placidly; "it was so bad in its temper with him. So he lets his friend, Manuel Moro, have it to run in a race. But its temper was also bad for Manuel, and it would not run for him at all, and all the money was lost—a man from Yorba winning the money with an Indian horse from back of San Jacinto, and it made many troubles. So, that palomino had a bad accident," and Doña Maria smiled and looked at him, knowingly, across the edge of her little black fan. —"Yes, it was so, and it was found under the cliff by the sea the very next morning after that race! Manuel said the palomino was a demon, and was like Querida.

It would run itself to death for love, but balked when there was good money up. Some horses are like that, *Señor.*"

Sargent thanked Doña Maria for the rare wine and the gracious shade of her palm trees and walked out along the columns of eucalyptus towards the mission.

In his mind was one clear-cut picture shutting out all the glory of the green and gold of the springtime — the picture of the beautiful animal with the living soul of bravery in its body, and of the slender young heretic who had crossed the flood of the quicksands in safety alone, yet —"

He heard the laughter of Nell and Tony, married lovers and happy, in the mission plaza, and halted under the shade of a feathery pepper tree by the fence.

"Oh, Tony boy," Nell was saying, half seriously, "it's a shame to be married in a place like this — the most ideal love-making nook we have ever struck — and to find it two whole years too late!"

There were murmured words in Tony's voice, and laughter over this tragedy, and then Nell's voice, singing, came to him:

> Brief days of desire, and long dreams of delight!
> They are mine when my poppy land cometh in sight!
> Oh, Life of my life —

He turned away, blindly. At every turn there was some thought to hurt.

The refrain of Nell's song followed him:

O Life of my life—on the cliff by the sea!

He could only see the wild moor above the cliff and the beautiful horse with its wild rider, strong and free as a bird skimming the ranges.

But the horse that would have run itself to death for love, lay broken, its bones bleaching on the rocks at the foot of the cliff.

And the rider?

He passed the open window of an adobe where an old man with a crutch sat in a little patio, and an Indian woman placed a loaf and a decanter of wine on the table beside him.

It was the old philosopher of many ports who had talked with him that once in the dusk of the mission arches, and told him to come back to San Juan in ten years.

He had come back in less, crossing and recrossing the lands where her feet had wandered in other days, but the journeys had been empty, and the end of the trail looked far away!

THE END

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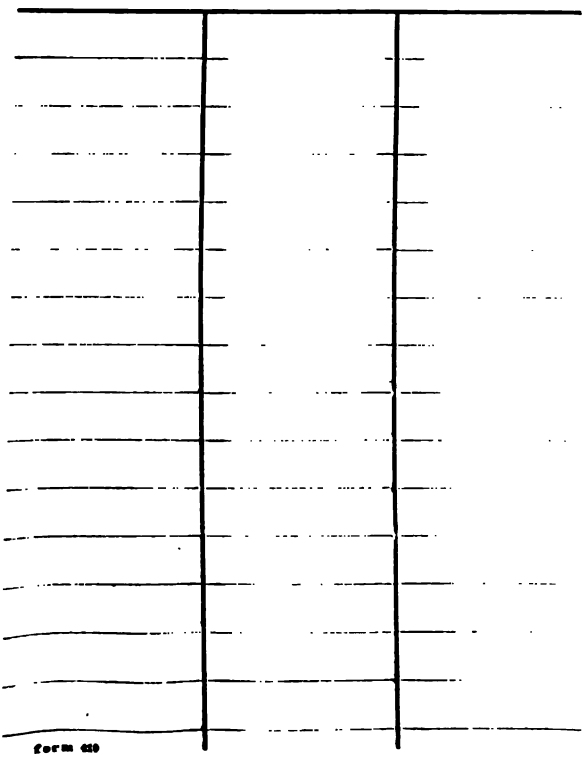
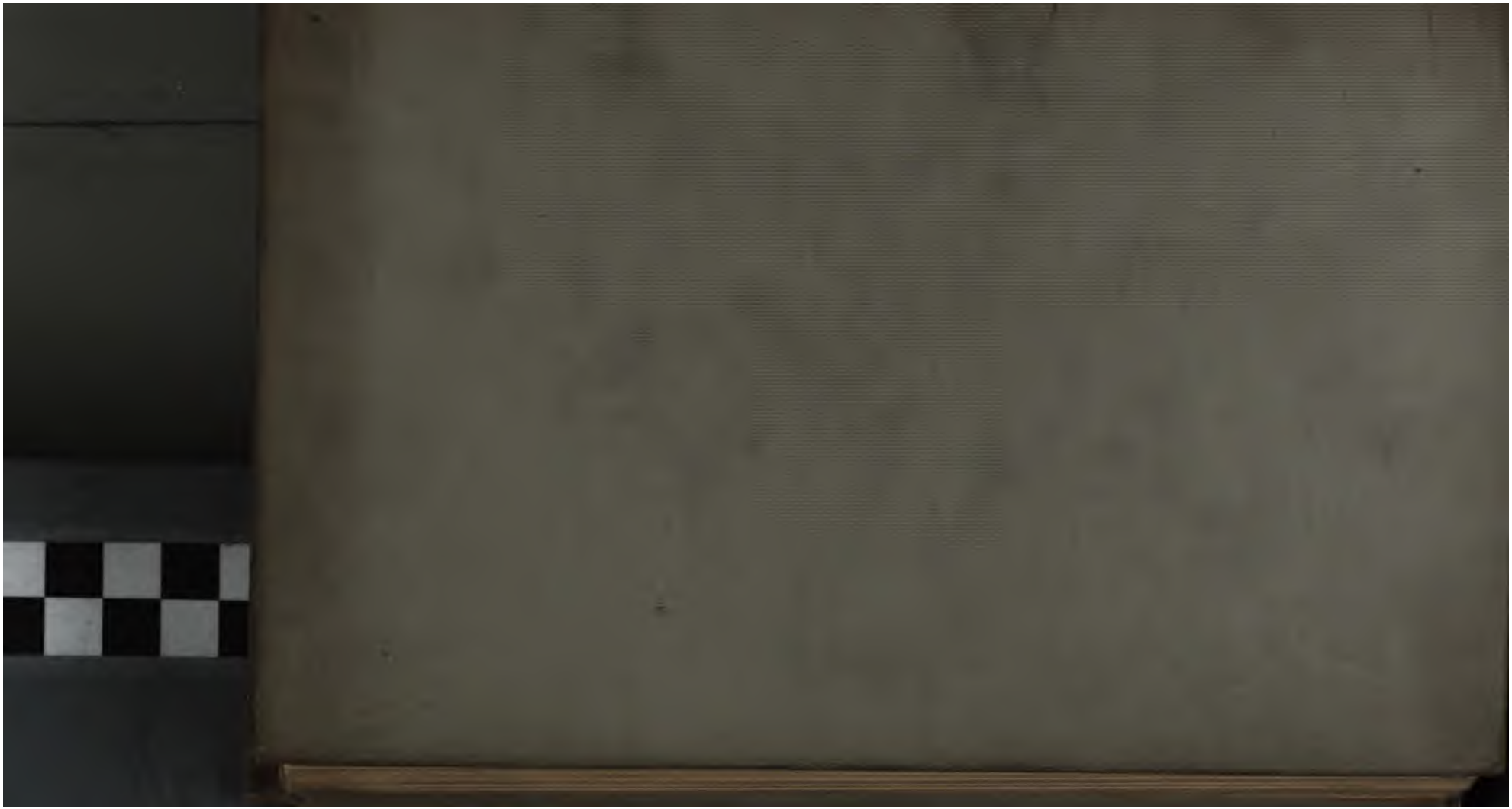
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